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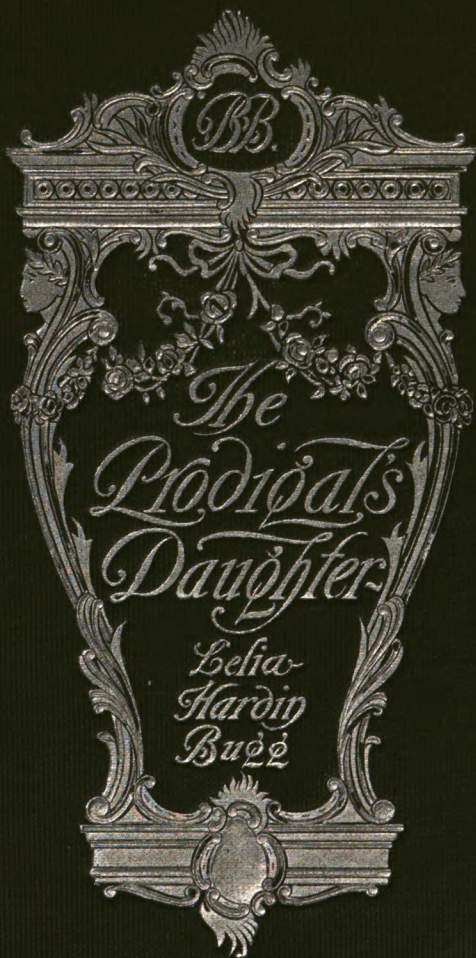
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THE  
PRODIGAL'S DAUGHTER,  
AND OTHER TALES.

BY  
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*Author of "The Correct Thing for Catholics," "A Lady,"*  
*"Orchids," etc.*

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To  
MR. AND MRS. EDWARD L. MILES.

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1848—1898.





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# THE PRODIGAL'S DAUGHTER.

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## I.

"I HAD a letter from Genevieve Morrison to-day, and she is coming back to Ovington to live."

Mr. Watson always took a keen delight in the effect of a surprise on his wife, and as her interest in other people's affairs was only equalled by her knowledge of them, a surprise which fell within the radius of personal gossip could be depended upon to evoke her liveliest appreciation. He leaned back in his chair, where he sat at the foot of his well-appointed table, glittering with new china and newer silver, and let his gaze dwell complacently on the plump, handsome matron who shared his joys and sorrows and shrewdly earned ducats. The Watsons were proud of their china and their silver, proud of their new home, proud of their

children, proud of each other; but they were dimly conscious that their intellectual attainments did not justify a great outlay of pride in that direction, and, as they made no attempts to reach a higher plane, their dinner-table talks were usually enlivened with topics that were both personal and local.

"What in the name of common sense is she coming to Ovington for?" queried Mrs. Watson, with that note of irritation in her voice which some women have when suddenly confronted with a baffling situation.

"She didn't say that she was coming in the name of common sense," answered her liege lord jocosely, who secretly entertained a belief in his own sense of humor. "I suppose she is coming because her property is all here, and because it used to be her home. At least that is what *I* should think," with a modest inflection on the *I*.

"Home! I'd like to know what she calls home; she hasn't a relative, and I don't believe a single friend, in the place. Where in the world does she expect to make her home, *ar jway?*"

"She writes that she would like to keep house on the co-operative plan with some refined, elderly widow, or she would bear all the expenses if she could get an inexpensive small house and a congenial chaperon. I guess she's got to trim down her sails a little bit; she's been spending the money she got for that Fourth Street house and living like a lord, so I reckon she won't want to sink a great deal in house-keeping."

"Why doesn't she stay in New York? I can't see why anybody would take Ovington when she could have New York," continued Mrs. Watson, who had the failing, common to nearly all residents of a new place, of belittling its attractions when in the privacy of her own family. "I should think she wouldn't want to come back where that old father of hers was so well-known!"

"Her father wasn't such a bad fellow," returned Mr. Watson, with the air of expecting his assertion to be flatly contradicted.

"Oh, no—only a drunkard and a gambler, and a loafer and a dead-beat," retorted his wife, with an irony which admitted of no compromise.

"Not so bad as that; Genevieve paid all his just debts, and some that were not just, when she came into control of her property, and she need not have paid them, for every foot of ground was deeded to her two years before her father died. He did like old Bourbon about as well as any man I ever knew, and he could rake in jackpots—I don't deny that, but those were stirring times, you must remember," said Mr. Watson, with that instinct of humanity which resents an attack on the dead.

"I don't see why in the world you ever got mixed up in their affairs," answered Mrs. Watson, shifting the point of debate.

"Simply because when Bolton, her guardian, died, I was appointed in his stead; nothing plainer than that, my dear, and I couldn't very well refuse. I haven't lost anything by it," and his tone conveyed an intimation that he might have gained something. Then, wishing to placate his wife on behalf of his charge, Mr. Watson continued, with that masculine bungling of a delicate task which is at once the despair and the scorn of feminine intuition: "I dare say Genevieve is a very nice girl. She has

had every advantage at any rate, and I hope you will like her; she will naturally expect you to pay her some attention when she gets here."

"Well, I don't see why she should expect anything of the sort! I never saw her in my life, and I don't propose to have a gambler's daughter foisted on my hands," returned Mrs. Watson, angered at her husband's want of consideration for her exalted social position, which had been acquired with her new house, and which was too recent to be altogether secure.

The entrance of the maid with the dessert—a butler had not yet been added to the *menage*—silenced whatever reply might have been on the lips of the master of the house, and when he was again free to continue the discussion he thought it wise to change the subject. The next morning he said, with his hand on the door knob, so as to be ready for an instant escape in case of a connubial storm: "My dear, I wish you would look around for a suitable companion for Genevieve Morrison, and see about a house, and let me know, for I haven't any time, and she wants an answer soon."



Mrs. Watson was a well-preserved blonde of thirty-seven, who had married at nineteen the son of a small merchant in Indiana, and had come with him in the wake of the boom just starting over the West, to begin her house-keeping experiences in a five-roomed cottage in Ovington. Mr. Watson at that time was a young man with pluck, energy, health, business capacity, and a common-school education. He invested the capital given him by his father in real estate, and went to work in a store at ten dollars a week. Luck steadily smiled on the couple, and while he climbed the ladder of success to the rung marked "Solid men of the city," his wife developed into a prominent figure in that society which is spelled with a capital and pronounced in italics.

After the departure of her husband for his office, where he transacted thriving deals in real estate, Mrs. Watson sat on the veranda, across which stole the mild September sun, reading the Ovington *Star-Herald*. A click at the gate made her look up, to see coming along the walk the portly form of Mrs. Henry F. Tubbs, a lady with whom she was assiduously cultivating an

intimacy which so far had best prospered with herself. The honor of an informal morning call brought a beaming smile to her rather pretty face, and she started to meet her friend with a step which would have been graceful but for her increasing flesh—her mind had retained its girlish lightness, but her body had not—and her welcome was both effusive and sincere to the matron, who received it calmly as her due, and shared the pleasure only in part.

Mrs. Watson's conversation was at all times personal, and in a matter of news she did by her neighbors as she would be done by, so that it was not long until Mrs. Tubbs was in possession of the plans of Miss Genevieve Morrison as unfolded by that young lady to her erstwhile guardian.

Mrs. Watson did not know that there were sundry recollections for her visitor connected with the Morrison name which were not pleasant to recall. In the days of long ago there had been certain transactions between the husband of Mrs. Tubbs and the father of Miss Morrison, which had not redounded to the credit

of either gentleman—transactions which began at the card table and ended with the transfer of some valuable lots from Henry F. Tubbs to Matthew J. Morrison. Had the parties of the first part been transposed to the parties of the second part in the deed, her recollections might have been less vivid, as well as less rigorous.

Mr. Tubbs had shortly afterward been made to see the error of his ways, and the wisdom of putting his property in the name of his wife; these things belonged to the hazy past, and Mrs. Tubbs had been a great lady so long, her husband one of the richest men in Ovington, those early days so completely forgotten, that this sudden rattling of her skeleton brought a glitter to her eyes which the most casual observer would not have mistaken for natural animation; otherwise she gave no sign, and her hostess was at times a little obtuse.

Mrs. Tubbs exclaimed: "Good gracious! what's the girl coming here for? Of course she couldn't help her father, but of all places to want to live in! She'll find out a few things when she gets here! We can't associate with

everybody; the line's got to be drawn somewhere, and I for one intend to draw it at a girl who used to go barefooted, Heaven only knows where, while her drunken father was sleeping off a spree or carousing around the saloons."

Mrs. Tubbs, at the outset of her fashionable career, had subscribed to a course of lectures on "Social Usages," given by a lady who announced herself as a society leader of New York; and amid a heterogeneous mass of information about finger-bowls, the respective duties of the coachman, the butler, the footman, and sending cards by post, she remembered that exclamations were not good form, but at times the force of old habits was too strong for the more recent veneering; besides, Mrs. Watson had not attended the lectures, and from the plentiful use which she herself made of the ostracized phrases, she was doubtless ignorant that they had been relegated to the limbo where Miss Morrison and other undesirable elements belonged. Mrs. Tubbs was also conscious that her friend's admiration would survive any trifling test like a slip of the tongue or a breach

of good manners. She had long since found out that the lectures, which had cost each subscriber ten dollars, had afforded instruction that was, for the most part, unavailable in Ovington. A cook, a second girl, and a man-of-all-work were the limit in the line of domestics in the most extravagant families; and, as making calls was the favorite amusement, a visiting card received through the mail would have subjected the sender to a suspicion of insanity; while in a city where business was done with a rush in keeping with a place which had been ranked as first-class by the postal authorities before it was old enough to vote, the men could not be expected to tolerate finger-bowls except on Sundays. As to the hints on language, Mrs. Tubbs put in practice her theory that the occasion had much to do with their binding force. The Duchess of Marblehead said "fancy," and she could not see but that "good gracious" was just as sensible an expression, and certainly a more forcible one.

Her feelings were somewhat mollified by Mrs. Watson's imploring tones: "Dear Mrs. Tubbs, I am in *such* an unpleasant situation

in regard to the girl; my husband insists that I must call on her, and what can I do?"

Mrs. Tubbs agreed that a formal call, made because of the business relations of Mr. Watson and the young lady, would not imply a friendship at all, and after that she need not bother about the stranger.

The one perennial grievance which Mrs. Tubbs had with fate was her name; that innocent combination of letters tempered her joy at seeing it at the head of the very smartest affairs. Tubbs, Tubbs, was ever a woman so afflicted! She dared not even hunt up the family annals for fear that they might begin in soap-suds, nor could she hyphenate the difficulty, for her own name of Brown had appeared such a grievance that she had hailed Tubbs as a desirable change. Brown-Tubbs would never do in a country where there was no respect shown to rank by the lower classes, and in a place where any street urchin who chose might paraphrase a well-known ballad to "The Little Brown Tubb." But whatever dignity was lacking in the name, the bearer of it atoned for, as far as she could, by an extra regality of demeanor, and, as she

sailed into the drawing-room to pass judgment on a new piece of statuary, Mrs. Watson mentally compared her to a duchess. Mrs. Watson's ideas of duchesses had been acquired altogether from books and pictures, which omitted the wrinkles and rouge, the embonpoint and snub nose, and the other little peculiarities which characterize some of their graces, so that the comparison implied a compliment that might have been lacking on the lips of more knowing ones.

Mr. Watson wrote a very cordial letter to Miss Morrison—he was really better-bred than his wife—regretted his inability to find what she desired in the way of a chaperon, but hoped that there would be no difficulty when she reached Ovington. He was strongly tempted to invite her to make his house her home until she could get settled, but fear, not so much of his wife's displeasure as of his wife's tongue, overbalanced the hospitable impulse.

## II.

It was mid-afternoon of a glorious day in early October when Miss Genevieve Morrison looked at her watch as she sat in a vestibuled train westward bound from Chicago to the Golden Gate, and said to herself: "In three hours I shall be in Ovington." She did not say "home" any longer, even in her thoughts, as she had done during the first weeks after her resolve had been formed. Mr. Watson's letter made her realize more distinctly than ever before how very much alone in the world she really was, and how homeless. The enthusiasm with which she had dreamed of having a cosey little nest of her own had almost evaporated; still her plans were unchanged, it was only that she had ceased to anticipate any great pleasure in carrying them out. She took from her travelling bag a volume which, upon being opened, could be stretched to a surprising length, and unfolded a series of views of the principal



places in Ovington, taken in the best style of the leading photographer, and supplemented by a glowing history of the rise and phenomenal resources of the prosperous young city.

"I really think Ovington must be quite a charming place," she said to a little woman dressed in black, whose acquaintance she had made in the usual way of travellers, soon after leaving Chicago.

"I am sure it is, and I do hope you will like it," cheerily answered the stranger, who was on her way home to California. "You will soon make plenty of friends; Western people are proverbial, you know, for their kindness to strangers. We were all strangers once ourselves."

They had found each other so congenial that their acquaintance had speedily ripened into something like friendship, and the girl was already experiencing a little pang at the thought of the approaching separation. Her heart had been deprived so continuously of all natural ties that it clung the more steadfastly to friends; for hers was a warm, true heart, a heart capable of the deepest emotions. They had told each other about their hopes for the future, and their

lives in the past. The Californian was a wife who firmly believed that she had married Stockton's hundredth man, or some one else equally superior, and her opinion was made very evident as she chattered away about her husband, her home, and her little plans, to the girl who had only ideals.

As the train neared Ovington, Genevieve was conscious of a miserable feeling settling like a leaden pall over her soul, and she wished that she was going on to California with her new friend.

"Oh, I suppose everything will be pleasant enough after a while," she said to herself; "only going all alone to begin a new life among total strangers is an ordeal. It is like the first plunge into a cold bath, and I am afraid I don't like figurative cold baths any better than I do the real ones."

As she leaned back amid the pillows so abundantly supplied by the sable porter, whose benevolent impulses had been deeply touched by a crisp new bank-note, she gave no sign of a past not in harmony with the apparent luxury of the present. Her tall, slender figure was

encased in a faultless gown of Scotch cheviot which had been designed in London by a tailor to various royal highnesses; her gloves were new and bore the name of a Paris firm; her shoes long and narrow, to fit a foot of similar proportions, had been made to order in England; her umbrella, with its bog-oak handle, had been picked up in Dublin, where the tendency of the climate to rain on the slightest provocation had rendered imperative that a successor be found for the silver-handled affair which had disappeared in true Yankee fashion from a hotel in Edinburgh. She had soft, clear, honest, gray eyes, large and expressive, shaded by black lashes; a sensitive mouth, that could manifest all gradations of feeling as it curled in scorn, drooped in sadness, or wreathed in smiles; her complexion was of too deep a pallor to be beautiful, and she was not really a beautiful girl, her new friend decided, as she gazed at her critically with a view to a fireside description to an audience of one. "But she is better than pretty, she is interesting-looking, and no one could ever forget that high-bred face, nor a girl with such lovely manners. I

imagine she could be haughty in the extreme, if the occasion warranted, however; and she has a will of her own, I dare say."

Genevieve, unconscious that her companion was diagnosing her individuality as they talked about the views of Ovington, was nervous and distracted. She wondered if the pioneers of history had felt as she felt then. But they were leaving something definite, she thought, and she was merely a seeker, with no background of home memories to make the contrast.

"Yes, I suppose that there will hardly be a landmark left of the Ovington I knew. It is twelve years since I was there," said Genevieve.

"And twelve years represent marvellous possibilities to us in the West," answered the Californian. "Since we have the example of a city built in twelve hours, twelve years seem quite a respectable antiquity."

Genevieve had forgotten nothing of the past, but it appeared to her only like a well-remembered dream, or a life that had been lived by somebody else. Even her father had long since

ceased to be a very vivid personage in her imagination, for she was only eight years old when he died; yet as she drew nearer to her childhood's home, a flood of memories came rushing back that had been buried for years. Again she saw herself sobbing at her father's bedside, the flickering kerosene lamp with its sickly flame serving only to make the gloom more oppressive, the faded calico curtains fluttering in the wind as it came in with a mournful little wail through a hole in the window, the group of rough, unshaven men gathered around in the miserable room over the kitchen of Mrs. Ryan's boarding-house; the white-haired old clergyman in surplice and stole anointing the dying man—for he had begged for the consolations of religion when told that he was going to die.

"I haven't lived like a Christian, but I want to die like one," he moaned, and Mrs. Ryan took care that the opportunity was not lacking. And after her father had grown so pale and still, she remembered being forcibly taken out of the room by Mrs. Ryan, and put to sleep in a big feather bed; and how the next morning Tommie Ryan—"God bless his honest little

heart!"—had stolen in and pressed a piece of very sticky and very dirty molasses candy in her hands, as she stood sobbing with her face to the wall with the instinct of all wounded creatures to hide. Then came the day of the funeral, a dark, rainy, soggy day; the coffin borne to its last resting-place in a spring wagon painted black, which did duty for all the funerals in Ovington, for there was no hearse in those days; the long, slow ride in a shaky hack, over roads that were almost impassable, to the newly laid-out cemetery; her wild agony as they lowered the coffin in the grave and she realized that it was her papa they were taking from her; and her childish wail, "Papa, papa, come back to me!" Then the lonely nights when she cried herself to sleep in Mrs. Ryan's warm, tender arms, and the plaint from the depths of her desolate little heart: "Will my papa stay up in heaven, and leave me here all by myself?"

Scenes earlier still came back, scenes in which she was playing with Tommie Ryan, fighting with him too, when he insisted on his rights as against her wishes, for even then

she had a will of her own, and constant indulgence had not tended to suppress it; and recollections of the times when her father had gone up-stairs away from his little daughter, sick, so they told her, "drunk" she knew in after years would have been the proper term—but, drunk or sober, he had ever been indulgent to her, at all times she was his darling.

Her father had left a will; the most respectable one of his associates was named the guardian of his child, and his dying instructions were faithfully carried out. His personal property—which, strangely enough, consisted principally of some valuable diamonds—was sold to defray the expenses of her early education, and she was sent to a small, unpretentious convent which made a specialty of caring for orphan children too young for the restrictions of an ordinary boarding-school. Here she remained for eight years, eight uneventful, happy years; and then, in accordance with her father's wishes, she went to Mrs. Elder's famous school in New York for the finishing touches. He had always believed in Ovington, and had declared repeatedly that Genevieve would be a rich woman

through her corner lots, and he wanted her to have the advantages to fit her for the position. No one understood at the time why he should have selected the most fashionable school in the country, but it transpired that his only sister had been educated there, and it began to be whispered that old Morrison had seen better days after all.

From letters and fragmentary documents which she found locked up in a tin box, Genevieve gathered enough of family history to trace her lineage back through several high-born generations; and this knowledge she applied as a balm to images of her early years, which did not seem exactly ideal from the standard which prevailed at Mrs. Elder's. It was these vulnerable spots in her mantle of pride which made her draw it the more closely around her, and under which she developed a sensitiveness foreign to her natural disposition.

There were two pictures in the box: one of a haughty old lady in a lace cap, marked "My mother" in her father's well-known writing; and the other of a beautiful girl, "My wife, died Nov. 2d, 18—." "My own dear mamma



who must have died when I was a wee baby, for I don't remember her at all," thought the child, as she gazed longingly into eyes not unlike her own, but there was no other resemblance.

"I suppose I must take after the Morrisons." There were letters old and yellow, written on heavy paper and sealed with a crest, breathing a mother's all-forgiving love; there were other letters, stern, cutting, burning with a father's outraged pride; and there was the last letter of all, with the phrases which must have been branded on her father's very soul: "A disgrace to your family, a dishonor to your name, living or dead I never want to see your face again." And then Genevieve understood why her father had left his daughter to the care of strangers rather than to those of his own flesh and blood, and why other children had uncles and cousins and grandmothers to come to see them and send them dolls and candy, and she had no one.

Mrs. Elder, a high-bred, magnetic old gentlewoman, whom all her girls loved, received the tall, overgrown, rather lanky maiden, who came in her straight black convent uniform, with a

tenderness which won the orphan's instantaneous affections, and in less than twenty-four hours had rigged her out in proper attire. Mrs. Elder remembered the aunt, a swarthy Southern girl, with a superb intellect and no constitution, who died shortly after graduation, whom she knew came from a fine old family; but she did not know that she was then receiving the child of the very black sheep of that family.

During the three years she spent with Mrs. Elder, Genevieve blossomed into a young lady with ideas far in advance of her bank account. The fortune which her father believed in so firmly had materialized only in a degree. Real estate in Ovington went up with such a bound that the property-owners became dizzy and refused to sell, crying, like the boy in the fable, for more, more; then it went down again, and kept going down; money grew scarce as lots grew plentiful, and the property which would have made her fortune had it been sold just at the right time, brought to Genevieve only a moderate income. She spent her vacations at the different summer resorts under the chaperonage of one of the teachers, or a matron

selected by Mrs. Elder, and after she had graduated with high honors, she went abroad with a party then being formed by a reduced gentlewoman—one of the numerous bands of Hail Columbia maidens, as a certain French writer more witty than kind has designated the invading Americans who can be met with at all times and in all places in Europe. After fifteen months of foreign travel Genevieve came back to her native land, and as there seemed to be nothing else to do, turned her face towards Ovington. It was while on the steamer on the return voyage, when all her young companions were making their plans for a brilliant future, and talking about home delights with the zest absence gives to talks of that kind, that she definitely formed the resolution to go back to Ovington to live. It seemed so stupid, almost disreputable, to have no answer ready when asked the recurring question, Where is your home? America seemed entirely too indefinite, even in Europe, as a place of residence, and she had got into the habit of naming Ovington. She thought her corner lots, which had long since been converted into corner gro-

ceries and corner firms of various kinds, gave her at least that right; and as she paid taxes that were rather steep she felt at liberty to assert her claims as a non-resident resident of Ovington, as she mentally labelled herself.

She remembered only a crude new town, with glaring, hideous pine buildings, and on every corner a saloon which had been the temptation and the excuse for so much. She was trying to displace these hazy images with a vision of the beautiful city suggested by her book of views, but she confessed her failure to get the proper focus, and decided to wait for the reality. Thus released, her imagination took a new direction.

"My life has been a lonely one," she thought with a wave of self-pity that threatened to bring a gush of tears. "It has been but a series of partings. A tie is no sooner formed than it is broken;" and in keeping with this saddening reflection there passed in review before her the good-bys which had cost her such bitter pangs. First, her father—how her childish heart had ached for days and weeks, growing calmer with the months and reconciled with the years; Mrs.

Ryan, who in her plain, kindly way had taken care of her so tenderly during those early times; the Sisters who had given her almost a mother's love, and the convent where she had been so happy; Mrs. Elder, who had opened up new vistas of existence for her; the charming matron, under whose wise guidance she had seen the world, the old world of song and story, of art and literature, of historic tragedies and heroic ideals; the companions, whom she had loved with varying degrees of tenderness—their pathways had all departed, and here she was alone.

"East Ovington," sang out a brakeman in a nasal twang, which seemed to be a part of his official outfit, as the train slackened a minute in the outskirts of the city; and Genevieve had hardly gathered her belongings together when it rushed into the grand new Union Station, the pride of Ovington, and an incontrovertible witness, to the travelling public, of its importance.

Mr. Watson boarded the train before it had fairly stopped, and giving an interrogative termination to the name, "Miss Morrison," received a smiling response, "Here I am." He shook hands cordially and wished her a hearty

welcome to Ovington. It had not occurred to him to say "Welcome back to your old home." As they made their way down the long platform, hackmen shrieking in their ears, porters crying the names of the hotels, drays passing and repassing, scared-looking women timidly questioning lofty policemen, newsboys yelling out the evening papers, apple women, cold lunch fiends, and sad-eyed beggars in juxtaposition with the ubiquitous salesmen, the portly banker, the honest speculator dressed like a gambler, the professional sharper almost clerical in attire—Genevieve, who had pictured something more Arcadian, was quite bewildered. She exclaimed: "Why, this is the New York Central on a small scale, and not so very small either." During the drive to the hotel, which was on one of the principal thoroughfares, she noticed with expanding pleasure in the cursory view afforded from the carriage windows, the magnificent rows of trees just beginning to take on their gorgeous autumn hues which lined every street, the clear, bracing quality of the atmosphere, the deep blue of the sky, the newness of everything, and the novel cleanliness.

"What heavenly air," she said to Mr. Watson, who naturally took a property-owner's delight in having the place make a good impression on a stranger. "I always feel in the average city as if I should like very much to have the air washed before breathing it, but this—this is simply delightful. And, oh, those trees; how beautiful they are," she continued enthusiastically, voicing the admiration felt by all cultivated visitors in the newly grown-up Western cities where the officials have enforced the ordinance in regard to the planting of trees.

On reaching the hotel Mr. Watson saluted a personage, apparently one in authority about the elegant caravansary, whom they encountered in the ladies' entrance, with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, and performed the rites of introduction in the breezy way which is usually described as Western. Genevieve was not in the habit of shaking hands with the clerks in strange hotels, but she accepted the friendly greeting in the spirit in which it was offered.

"Your room is ready, Miss Morrison; you can go right up to it. I guess you're tired. Here, Pete, show this lady to one-thirty-three."

Mr. Watson, after seeing his charge safely domiciled in the Windsor, the leading hotel in Ovington, which was to be her habitation for a longer or shorter time, as fancy might elect or circumstances decide, took his departure, feeling the glow of satisfaction of one who had done all that could reasonably be expected of him. Before going he murmured something about Mrs. Watson's anticipatory pleasure in meeting Miss Morrison, but it did not impose on the girl; by that silent necromancy, feminine divination, mind reading, or whatever name is given to that subtle sixth sense which tells the secrets human tongues would keep, she knew that she need hope for no friendship from Mrs. Watson.

Genevieve was glad at last to get to her own room, to be out of the range of curious eyes and free to give vent to her feelings. A tide of loneliness, of utter desolation, swept over her heart; she walked to the window, and, leaning against its heavy plate-glass panes, gazed out on the busy, noisy, unfeeling street, with its carriages and electric cars flying past in a confused roar on the rattling asphalt; the throngs



of passers-by, all alert and prosperous looking; the stores across the way; the son of fair Italy conducting a war of words over a sale of bananas; and far above all the soft blue of the sky, flecked here and there with a tattered cloud. It was the first time she had ever been alone in a hotel, and the din without, the stillness within, broken only by an occasional swish of skirts down the corridors, the immensity of the world, her remoteness from all familiar scenes—seemed to strike her with an overwhelming force. “What is to become of me, what shall I ever do?” she wailed, and her nerves, already strained to their highest tension, sought reaction in a burst of tears. A knock at the door cut short even the luxury of grief, and giving a hasty dab at each eye with a handkerchief limp from the afternoon’s tears, for she had not thought of taking out a fresh one, Genevieve made a pretence of unbuttoning her gloves, as the chambermaid entered to leave some towels. She was a cheery, rosy-cheeked girl, with a smile lurking around her lips, and a song hushed only by the decorum of “the finest hotel in the West,” which would not

have permitted vocal efforts on the part of its maids. She was going out as silently as she had come in, when, noting the traces of tears, she said, with that sympathetic intonation which some people can put into the most commonplace utterance: "Have you everything you want, ma'am; can I do anything for you?"

Again alone and free to continue her weeping, Genevieve found that the desire to weep had vanished. Her spirits began to rise.

"This seems to be a very nice hotel," she mused, proceeding to examine her room in detail. "It has the usual amount of furniture, stiff and new, and hotel-like; I think I could recognize a hotel apartment were I to be blindfolded and set down in the centre of one."

She read the printed slip under the gas jets near the bureau, informing guests that gas was to be turned off and not blown out, and another slip by the door giving the usual rules and regulations about leaving valuables in the safe, the law governing landlord and guest, the restrictions in regard to washerwomen, dogs, and babies, and, at the end, the hours for meals. This brought her to practical considerations; she felt

that she could never enter a hotel dining-room alone, and had about decided on ringing the bell and asking the accommodating chambermaid to send her up a cup of tea, when another knock disturbed her deliberations, and the beaming face of Mr. Hubbard, the manager, whom she had met and mistaken for the clerk, appeared at the door.

“Supper will be ready soon, and I thought you might feel kind of strange going down the first time. We have what we call the family tables for the regular boarders, and I’ll take you down and introduce you to some folks, if you like. You must try to feel at home with us.”

Kindliness was written all over his big, rather coarse face, and he seemed so anxious for her comfort that Genevieve mentally made an act of contrition for having thought him vulgar, and his neckties glaringly, painfully red.

### III.

THE family tables were at the farthest end of the spacious dining-room, and on the way over, piloted by Mr. Hubbard, Genevieve had a chance to take her bearings. Colored waiters in white linen jackets were rushing hither and thither, as if their lives depended on haste, not so much because their patrons were clamorous, as to give the place the proper tone of business prosperity. It was the metropolitan way of conducting a hotel dining-room, and as Mr. Hubbard, in the classic and complimentary phrase in use west of the Mississippi River, had been described to the proprietor as a "hustler," it was his constant ambition to deserve the enviable appellation.

Without regarding the preliminary of asking on either side whether an acquaintance would be desirable—he had probably never heard of that little formula—Mr. Hubbard made Miss Morrison known to a group already assembled

at a table near the corner of the room. There were seats for eight persons, but only four were taken, Genevieve making the fifth of the party as she took the chair pulled out for her by a nimble mulatto, who flew across the floor at a signal from Mr. Hubbard, and stood smiling and bowing before her.

"Mrs. Carson, Miss Morrison; Miss Pearl Carson, Mr. Carson," and with a wave of the hand Mr. Hubbard indicated each person whose name was thus pronounced. Mr. Carson, a robust gentleman with a florid complexion, small good-natured eyes, a big beard, a big watch-chain, a big diamond in his scarf, and a look of secure prosperity, responded in a big voice, "Howdy do, Miss Morrison," and half arose as if to shake hands; but seeing that the young lady made no move to respond to his overtures, and as the table was too wide to be spanned by himself, he desisted. Mrs. Carson, who was a friend of Mrs. Watson's and an acquaintance of Mrs. Tubbs, and had, therefore, heard all about the young stranger, bestowed a jerky nod and murmured, "Happy to meet you, Miss Morrison," in a voice that succeeded most wonderfully well

in concealing the happiness expressed. She immediately gave her attention to the bill of fare for supper. The Windsor had not yet attained to the dignity of an evening dinner.

Mrs. Carson was conceded to be a woman with a mind of her own, and knowing ones intimated that it was made to do duty for the minds of two where questions of a connubial nature were involved; she had the appearance of living well, with black eyes, black hair sprinkled with gray, a set mouth, a Roman nose, and the air of knowing her own business and the business of a good many others besides.

Miss Pearl Carson merely bowed, but she did not refrain from a stare prolonged sufficiently to take in the toilet and the personal appearance of Miss Genevieve Morrison; it seemed almost an impertinence for a girl who had once gone barefooted and lived at a low boarding-house, to be so well dressed and so distinguished-looking. The barefooted part of the story was a fabrication woven in the imagination of Mrs. Tubbs, but it had dropped into circulation as current coin of gossip. Not but that it would have been true had Genevieve been allowed to

have her own way in those early years, for she dearly loved water, and a branch of the river ran temptingly near Mrs. Ryan's backyard; but she was a delicate child, and the few times she had succeeded in dabbling in the water instead of playing in the sand had partaken of the nature of forbidden fruit.

Miss Carson was a young lady who had ceased to celebrate her birthdays, too angular to have ever been a joy to her dressmakers, with a network of fine wrinkles around the eyes, which she filled in with a face-wash that took on a purplish hue on exposure to the atmosphere; she had hair the color of broom-corn, and the pale blue eyes that accompany that kind of hair, with an expression which an artist would have pronounced hard. She adored society, she declared, had been adored by it at a respectful distance for a good many seasons, and was reckoned a very cultivated girl. She entertained pronounced views on anthropology and biology, believed in co-education, proclaimed advanced theories in religion, and announced that, "We are gradually eliminating creeds," in a tone that conveyed the idea that she was em-

ployed as a special agent by the eliminators, and refrained from voting only because it had been pronounced by Mrs. Tubbs to be bad form. There was a weariness of life expressed in her attitude at times, caused by indigestion, and she usually developed pessimistic tendencies after eating salad and plum pudding for dinner.

Mr. Carson set the conversational ball rolling by the regulation questions: How did Miss Morrison like Ovington, and was she tired after her journey? Her impressions having been favorable, and expressed as being so, Mr. Carson went on to tell about the growth of the place and its wonderful history, for he belonged to that class who take a personal pride in the reputation of their city. He had been out of town on a hunting expedition and had just returned that afternoon, otherwise he would probably have known from his wife and daughter that Miss Morrison was not in ignorance of Ovington's early days.

"Miss Morrison is not a stranger," interrupted the matron, who would have said more only a warning look from her daughter precipitated a period in the middle of her sentence.



The young lady with the jewelled name did not consider it vulgar to ferret out all the information possible about other people's private affairs, but decidedly so to give any sign of that knowledge, and she could have shaken her mother right heartily for the indiscreet betrayal.

"Mr. Watson spoke of you to mamma—Mr. Watson is your man of business, I believe?" she interjected with a doubtful inflection, as if it were really of too little consequence to be remembered.

"Yes, I lived here as a little girl, but it is over twelve years since I went away; it was only a country town then, but it seems to have developed into a very beautiful little city," replied Genevieve in answer to Mr. Carson.

"How many inhabitants has Ovington now?" she asked, merely for the want of something better to say. Mr. Carson paused a moment, as if trying to recall the exact number; in reality he was debating whether to tell the truth or not. The population of Ovington was on a graduated scale, varying with the supposed credulity of the seeker after statistical information; with total strangers it had been known to

climb into the fifty thousands; where there was too great a possibility of detection, ten thousand were taken off, and with old residents and taxpayers talking just among themselves, it descended much lower. Mrs. Carson, who was something of a mind reader where her lord and nominal master was concerned, answered for him, as some wives have the habit of doing for their husbands: "Ovington is not improving as fast as it has been; a great many people have moved away, and it is hard to tell just how many inhabitants there are; I think you will find it quite a business place," she said, with the mental reservation that, whatever its shortcomings, Ovington was still far too good for old Matt Morrison's daughter.

Genevieve had no appetite, and after drinking her tea and choking down a few mouthfuls of steak, she would have gone back to her room, for the noise and glare made her head swim, and the Carsons seemed ill-bred and undesirable, only that she dreaded crossing that vast expanse of floor. Having decided to wait for her new acquaintances, like a true daughter of Eve she began to look around with a rising curiosity.

The few women scattered about at the different tables appeared dowdy and *bourgeoise*; the men were mostly bronzed and sinewy, with clothes that did not fit; there might be units here and there of a different stamp, but they were too few to change the general effect. Cattlemen and cowboys were talking with due appreciation of the luxury of having listeners, to trim, alert capitalists from the East; farmers, somewhat awed by the splendor of their surroundings, were eating their suppers with the zest of hungry men, in silence; two sons of Israel, jolly and prosperous-looking, were exchanging jokes and talking about sales over a bottle of something which might have been Apollinaris water, or might have been champagne: Genevieve could not tell at that range. She noticed that the dusky descendants of Ham, when not on active duty, leaned against the posts of the doorway, in attitudes that would have sent Mrs. Elder's perpendicular lackeys into spasms of Cockney disdain.

Mrs. Carson was calling for dessert, when Genevieve observed a young man coming across the dining-room in the direction of the family

tables; a waiter had also descried his entrance, and rushed to place himself in a deferential attitude behind a chair opposite her own. The newcomer received pleasant greetings from the several Carsons, who seemed to regard him quite as one of themselves. "Miss Morrison, Mr. Houston," said Miss Pearl Carson, without waiting for her mother to give the introduction, and then she began an animated chatter, in that high-pitched voice which some women affect in public. Mr. Houston made one or two endeavors to draw Miss Morrison into the conversation, but as he was not seconded by Miss Carson, nor encouraged by the young lady herself, he soon gave up the attempt.

"He seems to be a gentleman," thought Genevieve, as she made a pretence of eating a piece of pie which the waiter had brought her with Mrs. Carson's order. She approved of his well-knit figure, broad shoulders, brown eyes, clear-cut features, smoothly shaven face, his white shapely hands, and his sober business suit, which really appeared to have been made for him, and not for a wax figure in a clothing store window. The gentlemen of the Windsor

never thought of changing their attire for supper; their wives and sisters and sweethearts might do so, but if they themselves performed hasty ablutions and put on a clean collar, conventionality ought to ask no more.

As the Carsons evidently intended to wait for the young man to finish his supper, Genevieve viewed with no little consternation the numberless dishes which the waiter placed before him, for she was tired and nervous, and had seen all she wished of the Windsor guests, and of the young man himself.

"I wonder if he is taking the bill of fare in alphabetical order, and intends going from A to Z, with an etc. for dessert," she said to herself as he proceeded in the most leisurely manner to dispose of his supper. "And four people staying to keep him company; no wonder he looks conceited. He ought to have a raised dais with a silken canopy, and a phonograph from the Metropolitan Opera House to sing to him, to complete the Oriental effect."

Mrs. Carson led the march from the dining-room, and as Genevieve was last in line, Mr. Houston showed his forgiving disposition, after

the frigidity with which his advances had been met, by constituting himself her escort, and leaving Miss Carson to her father.

They repaired to the parlor, where it was the habit for the regular boarders to assemble in the evenings, especially the feminine contingent, but Genevieve excused herself at the door and went to her own room.

Miss Pearl Carson, who was perfect mistress of the art of damning with faint praise, took it upon herself to forestall her mother in enlightening Mr. Houston as to Miss Morrison's history; and as he rather prided himself upon his family (she knew that not so much from what he had said directly, as from the incidental things which had crept out in conversation), she painted the father in primary colors. She was inwardly raging that a girl, young, passably pretty, and so wonderfully stylish—she conceded that much—should be given the vacant place at her table; a place which she had hoped to see occupied by a man, rich and handsome, or at least unencumbered.

"The idea of a girl's coming alone to a hotel—it is positively not respectable; and to

think of her being at our table, too. I hope she won't have the effrontery to stay long."

Genevieve sat by the window looking at the far-off stars, the rows of electric lights, the trees looming like massive shadows down the streets, and thought of Europe, of her late companions and wondered what they were doing, of Mrs. Elder, of the convent, of Mrs. Ryan, of a whirl of things, until her eyes began to get heavy with sleep; then leaning her head on the window-sill, she said her night prayers with that passionate fervor which loneliness and trouble wring from human hearts, and went to bed, to dream of being choked by Miss Pearl Carson, and rescued by the Shah of Persia with the visage of Mr. Houston.

#### IV.

GENEVIEVE slept unusually late the next morning, and when she went down to breakfast she found the dining-room almost deserted. This meal began early for the benefit of the men who made the money, and ended late for the accommodation of the women who spent it; but even Miss Carson, who took her beauty sleep after daylight, was quitting the table as Genevieve entered the room. She was sipping her chocolate leisurely, thinking how nice it was that everybody had finished, leaving the whole room to her, when a waiter, who had gone out with an immense tray loaded with dishes, returned with the same tray containing two visiting cards, which he deposited with a sweeping bow before her plate.

"Mrs. Richard H. Watson. Thursdays," Genevieve read on the larger of the cards, and hastily swallowing her breakfast, she went up to the parlor to meet her former guardian



and his wife. Mr. Watson had insisted on this little civility, and the matron herself had a certain curiosity to see what the girl was like. She had marked out a course of dignified reserve, and in trying to carry it out she barely escaped being rude; but her condescending patronage made no more impression on the haughty damsel than a toad on a piece of granite; and perceiving her own failure in the rôle assumed, Mrs. Watson melted into cordiality and invited the stranger to go driving with her that afternoon to see the sights of Ovington. Mr. Watson, who was mentally chafing at the loss of so much time from his office, cut the call as short as he could.

After her visitors had gone Genevieve put on her hat, and started out to see if she could find any trace of Mrs. Ryan, with vague ideas of making her old protectress housekeeper and general manager in the proposed establishment.

"But maybe she has got to be *une grande dame*, too, on the rise in real estate," said the girl with a smile, thinking of Mrs. Watson. "Well, I sincerely hope she has. She deserves success." On the site of what had once been Mrs. Ryan's

domicile and the scene of so many memories for herself, Genevieve found a handsome stone structure, and grounds that showed a very commendable taste in landscape gardening. Turning away, with a keen disappointment at her heart, although she had already told herself that the house in all probability had been torn down to make room for improvements, she thought of the directory. Of course, Ovington must have a directory. Retracing her steps down-town she entered a drug-store, and, after buying some postage stamps as an excuse, asked to see the directory. Ryan, Ryan, there were half a dozen Ryans, and a Mrs. Ann Ryan who kept a boarding-house. Genevieve did not know whether her old friend's name was Ann or not, but determined to investigate. After a tiresome search she reached a shabby frame house in a side street, which made up in size what it lacked in other respects, bearing the desired number. The door was opened by a maid with a tip-tilted nose and a pert air, which immediately became suave when she perceived a stranger who might be a possible new boarder. Yes, Mrs. Ryan was at home, and

Genevieve walked into the parlor to await the appearance of the mistress of the establishment ; but her heart sank immediately with the conviction that her search was fruitless, for above the fireplace, where she remembered so well in the old days St. Patrick baptizing the King of Munster, hung a gorgeous lithograph of Lincoln. "Lincoln never could have overthrown St. Patrick," she said to herself, as the door opened and a tall, raw-boned, masculine-looking woman entered the room, as unlike the jolly, stout little matron, her childhood's friend, as could be well imagined. Mrs. Ryan, the grenadier, could give no information of any other Mrs. Ryan who at any time had kept a boarding-house in Ovington. "I believe I'll advertise in the papers," Genevieve decided, on the way back to the hotel.

In the afternoon the newcomer took the promised drive with Mrs. Watson. She had conned her book of views so thoroughly that she had well-defined ideas of what she was going to see ; but the buildings that loomed up so imposingly on paper were ordinary structures enough in reality ; the schools, with groups

of happy pupils scattered around the velvety lawns where flowers were blooming and fountains spraying and sparkling in the sunlight, were only big unfinished buildings with débris scattered about and windows boarded over or paneless, to let the playful cyclones wander through at will; the pictures represented merely great expectations. In the fashionable part of the city Genevieve was quite enchanted with the beautiful homes and well-kept lawns; she had a theory that the homes mirror a community, and with that in mind she thought that the Ovingtonians must be a very cultivated people. The prevailing architectural epidemic had apparently struck the city in a pronounced form, and the few houses that were not Queen Anne were of a hybrid variety, a cross between the Old Colonial and the style of the royal dame, which future writers on architecture will probably describe as the American renaissance. Genevieve enjoyed the drive, and Mrs. Watson was so impressed with her air and dress, and her way of being familiar with so many parts of the world which she had not thought of since her geography days, that she asked her to

dinner; and only the recollection of Mrs. Henry F. Tubbs restrained her from manifesting the liking she was really beginning to feel for her guest. She thought that she would pay her some attention in a quiet way, without letting Mrs. Tubbs into her confidence, and she could not see, taking all things into consideration as regarded Ovington society, why her friend was so emphatic in her condemnation. Mr. Tubbs himself was known to be still fond of a game of poker, and that he did not carry off the stakes she did not believe was owing to any high moral rectitude which made him refuse them, but only to poor playing; she knew, of course, that Henry F. Tubbs did not need the money, and that Matthew J. Morrison had needed it, but she was not advanced far enough in social ethics to understand why playing for money that was not needed was only a gentlemanly amusement, and playing for money that was needed, and needed pretty badly, was a disreputable act, that deserved to entail the disgrace it did.

Genevieve declined the invitation, which was not pressed, but she stopped a few minutes to

see the little Watsons, and to admire the new house.

She spent nearly all of the following day in writing letters, some of which were cheery and bright, giving no hint of the clouds, and one or two that touched only minor chords; but her correspondents lived too far apart to excite any fears of perplexing comparisons. The sun was already low in the western horizon, hanging fire in the softly veiled splendors of an October setting, when she stole out to mail her letters, and then started for a solitary ramble. Not many blocks away was a church which she had noticed during her drive, and thither she turned her steps. It was a brick edifice, with rough wooden steps, and it seemed to her to be about as ugly a structure as could have been evolved from the inner consciousness of an architect, had he been offered a cash prize for ugliness. Fresh from the mellowing grandeur, the poetic beauty of European cathedrals, this hastily put-up temple hardly seemed like a church at all; the St. John painted on a huge canvas behind the altar appeared to be in the last stages of consumption, with his left arm so strikingly

foreshortened as to be almost a deformity, and the marble angels on each side, the product of a worthy firm of stone masons in East Ovington, who made a specialty of tombstones and other works of art, as their circulars stated, were entirely too fat to suit generally accepted ideas of celestial habitants. All these things the girl noticed in a moment; the next she was on her knees, pouring out the prayers she had whispered beneath the dome of St. Peter's in Rome, the marble splendors of the Madeleine in Paris, or the gothic arches of the Cathedral in Cologne. "God is everywhere," she thought, "and everywhere the same." She came out feeling calm, and almost happy.

On her way back to the Windsor she stopped in at a bookstore with an imposing array of periodicals in the window, to lay in a temporary supply of reading matter. She looked over the motley collection of volumes which formed the "Earth Library," with their thin paper covers in aggressive reds and blues and uncompromising yellows, in glaring contrast to the æsthetic half tints, the old blues, the dull golds, and rich creams she was accustomed to see in

the paper-back publications with which she was familiar. The proprietor said that he had just received some good things in the "Earths."

"'A Fatal Mistake,' " she read. "All mistakes are fatal, fatal to something at least, or they would not be mistakes. 'Katie's Lovers.' If she had more than one she might have divided with some forlorn damsel, like myself for instance, who had none. 'Whose Husband was He?' his wife's probably." No, she did not want any of the "Earths." Did he have "A Little Journey in the World," by Charles Dudley Warner? He was sorry to say he had not, but he had "Around the World in Eighty Days," by Verne, which was said to be very fine. Would she like that? Genevieve thought not, and buying all the late magazines she returned to the hotel. As the days went by, Genevieve gradually became accustomed to her surroundings, and her life fell into a certain routine. She sent away for a box of books, the greater number of which were neither scientific nor religious, began the translation of a popular novel into French, bought a treatise purporting to teach fifty games of solitaire, and commenced



to embroider an altar cloth; but needlework as an occupation with no one to talk to was not very alluring. She resumed her journal, giving impressions and emotions—she had little else to chronicle; wrote voluminous letters to Mrs. Elder, the nuns, and the companions of her European jaunt; took long walks every day, went to church a good deal, and planned schemes for playing Sister of Charity on a limited scale.

All attempts to find a suitable chaperon, the first step toward that ideal home of which she dreamed, had utterly failed, and brooding over this one morning, a sudden inspiration came to her to seek out some of her mother's relatives and ask them to supply her needs. She was too loyal to her father's memory to make any advances to his family. "They say everybody has poor relations," she mused; "the point is just where to find them when wanted, and where not to find them, I suppose, when not wanted."

Without consulting anybody, merely telling Mr. Hubbard that she was going out of town for a few days, Genevieve packed a little bag, and started southward.

She found poor relations enough, and some rich ones, but all too distant to be available—there was nothing nearer than second-cousins—and while they welcomed her as a Morrison who could not help her father, that note of cordiality was lacking which would have made an intimacy possible. They were politely curious as to how she came to be educated at Mrs. Elder's most exclusive and expensive school and polished off in Europe, for their recollections of Matt Morrison had ever been associated with debts and difficulties, and they, unfortunately, had had no practical experience as to the result of the proper manipulation of corner lots.

Weary and disheartened, Genevieve went back to Ovington. She made her appearance in the dining-room rather late on the day of her return, and said "good-evening" to the assembled Carsons as serenely as if it were the usual thing for unprotected maidens to disappear from their accustomed haunts, and to reappear without a word of explanation to anybody. They had manifested a curiosity in the matter which their rather repellent attitude towards the newcomer did not at all justify.

They seemed to consider it a sort of affront to themselves that they had not been consulted, or at least informed about the trip. It was becoming plainer and plainer every day that Miss Morrison was a person of whom no well-regulated community could approve. And Miss Morrison, still fighting the pangs of a homesickness for a home she did not possess, a heartache for ties she had never known, a longing for friends who, with their larger interests in life, were less constant than she, with an uncertainty of the future which gave no promise of what it might or might not be, and an endeavor to make the best of the present, to adjust her life to her circumstances, had little room in her thoughts for the opinions of her neighbors. And, not being omniscient, she had no way of knowing anything about the little ripple of gossip concerning her very private affairs which had been set in motion by Mrs. Tubbs, and which threatened to grow into a wave. She thought that Miss Pearl Carson, who came to breakfast in a red tea-gown, with her hair done up like a ballet dancer's, must be rather a vulgar person, and the mother ap-

peared insufferably commonplace. But at the present crude state of the science of mind-reading, neither Miss Morrison nor Miss Carson could be aware that their mutual sentiments were decidedly not those of unqualified approval.

## V.

SHORTLY after her return Genevieve stepped into a bank to have a draft cashed—she usually drew her money through Mr. Watson—and there, before her startled orbs, perched on a stool at the cashier's desk, was Mr. Houston. She had sometimes wondered what particular niche he filled in the money-making world, and once when they sat together at dinner the old rhyme jingled through her fancy:

“Lawyer, banker, merchant, chief,  
Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief.”

And so he was a banker! Mr. Houston looked up as she approached the window, and in a moment had brushed aside the amiable little teller, and was standing before her, his manner conveying the intimation that himself and the whole bank were at her disposal. Their acquaintance had not advanced further than a formal salutation when they met at table, which was seldom, and the young man had continued

to bestow his conversational powers where they were evidently appreciated, on Miss Carson; but now he was as deferential as if she had been a duchess, and Genevieve took that sort of treatment. It was a hereditary trait coming to the front: the Morrisons had been famed for their old Southern chivalry, and the Morrison women expected that spirit in all men. Mr. Houston introduced the president of the bank, who happened to be standing near, adding: "Miss Morrison is one of our old clients, although this is the first time she has honored the bank with her presence." Mr. Desmonde, the president, said, as in duty bound, that he hoped it would not be the last. On leaving the bank Genevieve noticed that it was one of the ideal days which sometimes come in early winter, and decided to take a stroll up to Mrs. Watson's. Their acquaintance had progressed to the point of a liking (always modified by Mrs. Tubbs's ideas), on the part of Mrs. Watson, and an appreciation of some one to talk to when solitude became oppressive on the part of Miss Morrison. "Why, certainly, I know Mr. Houston—everybody knows Mr.

Houston," chirped Mrs. Watson, in answer to Genevieve's careless query. "He is one of our most popular young men, I assure you; goes everywhere, is quite a leader in Ovington society, and all the girls adore him. Mr. Watson says he will make his fortune, too. Some of his investments have turned out splendidly."

"Ah, that accounts for it—that intangible air of opulent complacency which is faintly suggested at times. So the girls adore him, and fortune smiles on his path. Adoration and prosperity—enough, and more than enough, to spoil any man," thought Genevieve, with a wisdom not born of any practical experience of her own, but of a superficial reading of the dyspeptic philosophers.

That evening at supper Mr. Houston greeted her with the air of an old friend, and immediately commenced a running comment on the weather, and things in general and particular, interspersed with a few direct questions which soon swept down her reserve; she admitted to herself that drinking tea flavored with the mild wit of an agreeable young man was more pleas-

ant than taking that beverage in silence. Miss Carson did not view the change with sentiments of rapture, and her attempts to divert the attentions of Mr. Houston, while partially ignoring Miss Morrison, was a failure with no redeeming circumstances. Afterwards the field would be clear, she thought, for the intruder had hitherto held aloof from the reunions of the Windsor regulars in the parlor, but Mr. Houston's "Surely, Miss Morrison, you are not going to desert us again," floated to her listening ears, and a minute later the couple entered the room.

"My friend, Mr. Alston, is particularly anxious to meet you," continued the adorable cashier. This was a bit of fiction born of the inspiration of the moment, but it had a kindly sound, and Mr. Houston's impulses were naturally benevolent.

"Hello, Houston, you are late to-night," cried Mr. Alston, who was posing by the piano, and looking as sentimental as a pair of twinkling blue eyes and closely cropped hair, a little too thin on top, would permit. A very pretty woman in black finished a popular aria and turned to receive well-earned applause.



Mrs. Graham, "the Windsor cantatrice," as Mr. Alston styled her, was a widow with a desire of not remaining one, and a past about which she was reticent. She greeted Genevieve effusively, and said that, as their rooms were on the same floor, they ought to be good friends. The ladies of the Windsor did not exactly approve of Mrs. Graham, as she very well knew, but so long as the gentlemen did, she cared very little. Mr. Houston was not well pleased to have the two enter into an animated conversation. He did not know very much of Mrs. Graham, and scarcely anything of Genevieve, but he had lived at the Windsor long enough to understand that a girl entirely alone would just as well not be too friendly with Mrs. Graham.

Under other circumstances Genevieve would have resented the easy familiarity with which the widow talked to her, for she was a proud girl, and the rather disreputable odor of her father had only served to intensify the family failing—but her loneliness, the uncongeniality of the Carsons, her sympathetic temperament, all were in the balance, and she welcomed the

advances as a thirsty flower does an August rain. Mr. Houston, however, whose cleverness was capable of taking a diplomatic turn, said at the first pause in the conversation: "Miss Morrison plays charmingly, and Mr. Alston and Mrs. Graham can discount the fairies when it comes to the latest dance."

The hint was acted upon, and as Genevieve did play well, although the assertion was the wildest guess on the part of Mr. Houston, and with a *verve* and expression which gave to dancing an added pleasure, the parlor soon became an improvised ball-room. Even Miss Carson melted into a show of friendliness as she stopped after a dance to compliment the musician.

As the weeks wore away Genevieve was gradually enlightened as to the social customs of Ovington, which seemed to her to be somewhat peculiar. She was sitting by her window, as usual, one evening, studying the stars from a poetic rather than an astronomical point of view, when the sound of a familiar laugh, and of wheels stopping at the entrance, made her look down in time to see Mr. Houston assisting Miss

Carson to alight from an open buggy. Riding around in buggies with gentlemen at nine o'clock at night without any chaperon was not one of the things allowed in the code taught at Mrs. Elder's, and Genevieve wondered, without feeling any pleasure in the idea, if the couple were engaged, and if that were the custom for betrothed pairs in Ovington. "I don't believe they are engaged, after all," she said to herself before going to sleep.

Shortly before Christmas Mr. Houston invited Miss Morrison to go to the theatre with him. "I should like to go ever so much, Mr. Houston," she said, "only I have no chaperon." He colored a little, for he had so far acquiesced in the views of the Windsor set as not to expect that a girl who lived alone, travelled alone, and managed her own affairs generally, would be very punctilious about the minor conventionalities. "Chaperons have not come in yet," he laughed good-naturedly. "You see, we of the sylvan West have declared our independence from the customs of the effete East, but I dare say we could manage the question of a chaperon."

He thought that it was unfortunate that Mrs. Carson should have appeared on the scene, in time, he was sure, to hear his invitation and its answer. He suspected that she was the kind of woman to resent the implied criticism of her acts and opinions, and those of her daughter. He was dimly conscious that the cabal which had long been formed against Mrs. Graham was being made to include Genevieve as well, and Mrs. Carson's influence was formidable.

That evening he ventured to say to a lady high up in the world, that worldly world which is generally considered first cousin to the flesh and the devil, that he was thinking of giving a theatre party, and to ask if she and her daughter would grace his box, bringing in Miss Morrison's name with elaborate carelessness, which did not impose in the least on the astute matron. She instantly said, with the right of an old acquaintance to be disagreeable, that she did not care to have her daughter meet the young lady. Miss Morrison was doubtless a worthy person, but it was a little unusual for girls to live alone at a hotel, and to be running

around the country unprotected; and, besides, her father—well, everybody had heard what her father was, and in a new place where society was so mixed anyway, one had to draw the line somewhere. Mr. Houston had before remarked that there was a good deal of talk about drawing the lines in Ovington, and he had noticed that they were usually drawn in curves and angles instead of taking the shortest distance between two points; so that there was no little caprice in the exclusions. But as the lines refused to accommodate themselves in the present instance to his desires, he was disposed to feel an ill-humor towards the whole social fabric of Ovington, which all the traditions of a gentleman forbade him to show—except by taking an early departure. He murmured to himself as he passed out in the clear, electric-lighted night: “Woman is an unknown quantity in any problem.”

A frown was still sending three vertical lines over his forehead and to the bridge of his rather fine nose, when he emerged from the cable car which had carried him down-town from the fashionable residence precincts of Ovington,

and turned his footsteps in the direction of a confectioner's brilliantly illuminated shop. He bought a big box of candy, which he sent, on reaching the hotel, to Miss Morrison.

He believed in conventionalities, he told himself; he even believed in chaperons, and most certainly he believed in relatives, for he had been brought up with a regard for family only a little less deep than his regard for the decalogue; but above all things he believed in the opinions of James Houston, and it seemed a direct impugning of his superior judgment to have a lot of old women decide over his head that a girl to whom he wished to pay some attentions should be counted out of the ruling set. His invitation had been merely a kindly impulse of a generous heart, and if there had been no obstacles thrown in the way of his taking Miss Morrison to the theatre, it probably would not have been repeated during the rest of the season, for his social obligations did not leave him many free evenings; but he disliked to be baffled.

Soon afterwards the opportunity came for Genevieve to show her appreciation of Mr.

Houston's courtesy. A local amateur concert for the benefit of the hospital fund had succeeded in the old way of combining fashion and charity in the same grooves, and everybody was either buying tickets or selling them for the concert. Genevieve, on being solicited by Miss Carson with her most loftily gracious air, took three tickets, and straightway enclosed them to Mr. Houston, naming Mrs. Graham as the third member of the party. Mrs. Graham accepted the invitation with pleasure, having sweetly fibbed to all solicitors when approached for some of her none too abundant dollars, saying that she had already taken tickets, intending on the evening in question to have a headache, provided that none of her admirers had secured her fascinating society for the concert. Mr. Houston accepted, apparently with pleasure also, although his pleasure would have been greater had Mrs. Graham been eliminated. It was unmanly to say anything in disparagement of a woman, and yet it was repugnant to his subtle perceptions as a man of the world to see an unprotected girl matronized by the wrong kind of person.

By chance the seats of the trio were next to those of the Carsons, and when Genevieve inquired what the orchestra was playing, Mrs. Carson, with a look of pity for one so uncultivated, answered, "Why, that's Wagner," only she pronounced the first syllable of Wagner to rhyme with a game indulged in by old-fashioned boys and girls, called tag. On looking at the programme, Genevieve found that it was the overture to "Tristan and Isolde," but the leader of the orchestra had ventured to modify and simplify the score so as to bring it more in accordance with the ability of his players. With a flash of memory Genevieve was back at Mrs. Elder's, listening to a professor with long hair, a long name, and a long nose, who, for an enormous monetary consideration, had been induced to explain the great Wagner to the young ladies of that celebrated institution. She seemed to be hearing again his masterly touch on the piano, as he illustrated his lecture by playing the different motifs; the periods of his spoken utterances, which were not altogether faultless, accentuated by a rub at his nose; until Genevieve had wondered if some of the auditory



nerves had been side-tracked to the nasal organs, or if that were merely his way of showing appreciation of his own erudition. But ah, how he could play! The yearning of the Dutchman, the sacrifice of Brunnhilde, the majesty of Wotan—the eagerness, gladness, tenderness, brought out by the velvety triplets, the ascending tonality expressing youth with all its ebullitions of hope and love—how beautiful he had made it all appear! And the listening girls with their high-bred, generally pretty faces, and Mrs. Elder, graceful and gracious, seemed before her. And after the recital, how charmingly the graduates had dispensed tea to the Seniors and Juniors, as they would be doing in their own homes in another season—how delightful it all seemed; and here was she in far-off Ovington, no home in which to dispense a hospitality, correct or otherwise; no friends to drink her tea if she had served it, listening to an overture *executed* by a people not even cultivated enough to know the depths of their ignorance. A feeling of desolation swept over her, bringing a hard little lump to her throat and a moisture to her eyes, and she

had to wink rapidly to keep the tears from overflowing, for she was sitting on the pocket that contained her handkerchief, and she knew that she could not reach it without standing up and attracting the attention of the whole audience. Mrs. Graham, who had much of that elusive quality called personal magnetism, exerted herself to be entertaining; Mr. Houston talked well, with no hesitation about doing so, and some of the numbers were excellently rendered—for Genevieve was not altogether just in her estimate of Ovington—but she was conscious only of unutterable weariness. “There seems to be a crush,” she thought, “and that means plenty of money for the poor unfortunates at the hospital. It’s a sad old world after all.”

## VI.

A GIRL possessing two ears in a normal condition could not fail to acquire a good deal of information of a local character from the boarders who assembled three times a day in the Windsor dining-room. Miss Pearl Carson was the first to announce to the delighted guests that their number was to be augmented most charmingly by Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Desmonde. Genevieve had not lived nearly three months at the Windsor, nor partaken of two hundred and seventy meals, on a rough calculation, in the society of Mrs. Carson and her daughter without knowing that the coming of the Desmondes was an event worth talking about to the "regulars" with aspirations to make the Windsor set exclusive.

The Desmondes were great personages in Ovington. Mr. Desmonde was president of a bank, vice-president of a street railway, president of the Lotus Club, president of or ex-

president of various minor concerns, and incidentally, quite incidentally in the estimation of some who had acquired the money standard by which to measure the intellectual, social, and moral elevation of a community, an honorable, upright, cultivated gentleman, somewhere near fifty. His wife, many years his junior, he regarded as the loveliest, sweetest, most attractive woman in Ovington. With certain reservations, Ovington shared Mr. Desmonde's opinion of Mrs. Desmonde. That she was the most influential woman in the place public opinion was quite unanimous in affirming. She was even great enough to be able to choose her own friends, and this privilege she exercised in a way that was something of a puzzle to Mrs. Tubbs.

"A provincial existence has trials enough without one's being bored with uninteresting people," Mrs. Desmonde was wont to say, and listeners murmured an assent just as if they did not, many of them, value their friends exactly as the husbands and fathers were rated in the secret pages of the all-knowing Bradstreet.

To Mrs. Tubbs, the throngs who frequented

her monthly receptions, the callers who dropped in on her Fridays at home for a cup of tea and a bit of gossip, both of which could always be had, even the matrons who headed her visiting-list, were as lacking in individuality as the women in Turkey. And, unfortunately, Mrs. Tubbs was not an oddity in Ovington. Mrs. Watson, who was naturally of a warmer, more sincere temperament than her friend, was doing all that she could to mould herself into the likeness of a bad model.

It was after a day spent in helping her ex-guardian's wife with the elaborated wardrobe of a doll which was to delight the heart of the youngest Watson on Christmas morning, that Genevieve said to herself, during the walk to the hotel: "I know that one of Mrs. Watson's friends lives in that semi-gothic, partly Dutch, would-like-to-be Italian mansion in Belgravia Place, and that her husband is worth half a million made in hair mattresses; that another friend keeps a carriage, wears lovely diamonds, and goes East every summer on an income derived from pork; that the young lady who stopped in her cart to deliver a message from

her mother owns two houses and a hundred shares in the Washington mines, and has the reputation of being the best dresser in Ovington; that the widow with whom she dined last week is the relict of one of the leading men, whose large fortune, starting on a once popular corner, had been watered with bad whiskey during the years of its tender infancy, until it grew large enough to require a four-story building for its expanding proportions, and barrels of choice brands to keep it in a healthy condition. Whether any of these people can talk, write, sing, play; whether they are cultivated, well-bred, well-born; whether they are Christians, Buddhists, agnostics, or infidels, Mrs. Watson does not seem to consider. Well, as I am not rich, nor a leading citizen, nor the wife of one, I suppose I shall have to continue in most unmerited obscurity. Bah! what does it matter after all? Cæsar didn't know what he was talking about, or he would have chosen Rome rather than to be lord mayor of that prosy Roman village. I wonder what Mrs. Desmonde is like. Mr. Desmonde seemed to be a very nice sort of a person."

Genevieve might have been more curious in regard to the expected guest had she known that there were not a few matrons who had passed with brilliant success from one social round to another until they had reached the coveted circle with an axis of its own, who had never been favored with one of Mrs. Desmonde's cards. Among these was numbered Mrs. Carson, although she was careful not to mention the oversight; she had served on the hospital board with Mrs. Desmonde, and business connected with a charity patient had once afforded her an excuse for a call on her admired associate; but from the way in which she dilated on the house, the exquisite taste displayed in the furnishings, the luxury of the appointments, one might have inferred—and the inference would have been the keenest delight to Mrs. Carson—that she was a frequent guest at the Desmonde mansion. Genevieve happened to be present when the new arrivals made their first appearance in the dining-room. In the person of Mrs. Desmonde she saw a thin, lithe figure, stylishly gowned, a pair of brown eyes, Titian hair slightly streaked with gray, a good-natured

mouth, a short nose on which two or three freckles had taken root, and which invited others to spend the day if the owner of the nose stayed long in the wind and sun; and a fair complexion which atoned for the troublesome freckles. Mr. Desmonde's back was turned so that she could see only his broad, well-cushioned shoulders, and a bald spot, almost as big as a silver dollar, on the crown of his head.

Mrs. Desmonde's greeting to the Carsons was not as warm as Genevieve had been led to expect it would be from the unstinted admiration of the elderly dame, and from the Pearl's eulogy, delivered nearly altogether in superlatives.

The Desmondes had come from Baltimore, where their family tree, planted in the soil of the Calverts, had already celebrated a centennial of honorable growth. Mrs. Desmonde frankly confessed that it was not the climate, nor the lack of appreciation of the delights of an older civilization, which had brought them to Ovington, but considerations of a more material character. Genevieve, who had improved her opportunities for the study of human nature, had already remarked that nearly all the habitants



of Ovington had been people of importance in their former homes. The city was too young to have any old families of its own, and with local historians living in the midst of society, it was not always prudent to admit having been a first settler; but there were no obstacles in the way of a splendid past. It sometimes happened that there was an awkward discrepancy between the accounts of two persons, who by one of those little coincidences familiar to everybody, had come at different times from the same place; tales of former grandeur had been brought to an abrupt termination at the appearance of an old acquaintance, and a high and mighty ancestor sent into the shades as unceremoniously as a ghost at the stroke of dawn.

It was a fortnight before Genevieve made the acquaintance of Mrs. Desmonde, although she had overheard that admired and admirable matron telling Mr. Alston that she was tired of changing cooks; that Mr. Desmonde was getting dyspepsia, and that her own natural sweetness was being spoiled; that when the coachman gave warning, the water pipes froze, Mr. Desmonde's

favorite horse got epizooty, and she discovered two new wrinkles around her mouth, all in one day, they decided that human endurance had stood enough of housekeeping, and that they would try hotel life for a change.

Mrs. Desmonde, during her first days at the Windsor, usually went with the procession from the dining-room to the parlor, enjoying, she said, the novelty of having company at all hours without the responsibility of being hostess; but as Genevieve seldom made her appearance unless particularly requested by Mr. Houston to do so, or her services were wanted as a musician, the winter might have passed away without their having met, but for a mere chance. It was the forenoon of a rainy Sunday; Genevieve had wandered aimlessly into the deserted parlor, and begun strumming on the piano, when a minister from the rural districts, who had missed his train and been compelled to remain over Sunday at the Windsor, came in with Mr. Houston, and begged, in his old-fashioned, gallant way, to be favored with a little sacred music. After exhausting her limited repertoire of purely religious pieces,

her fingers rippled into the latest waltz, played in fugue time with improvised variations. This sent Mr. Houston into an unmistakable giggle, and evoked the remark from the dominie that it sounded quite solemn, just like Sunday. Genevieve replied without a smile that the piece was called "The Sabbath Calm." Mrs. Desmonde, happening in at that juncture, received an explanation from Mr. Houston as to the cause of his merriment. She was not disposed to be critical of the humor offered on a rainy day, and, after the withdrawal of the clergyman, entered into an animated chat with Genevieve and Mr. Houston.

Mrs. Carson, as an old associate on the hospital board, had already taken it upon herself to enlighten Mrs. Desmonde as to the desirability or the degree of undesirability of the different residents of the Windsor, but the matron had not appreciated the information. In the midst of the doubts expressed as to whether Mrs. Graham were a widow in reality, or only a widow in law, whether Mrs. Brown and her husband were happily married, where Mrs. Somebody else got all the money she spent,

and the dubious antecedents of some other woman, Mrs. Desmonde was debating in her mind whether to get reseda or old rose brocade to combine with a last year's silk, and had about decided on the reseda, when her wandering fancy was recalled by the mention of "that Morrison girl." Why the unimposing array of four letters—*t-h-a-t*—should carry with them a measure of contempt, is one of the curiosities of language which Mrs. Desmonde did not attempt to analyze; but their application to one of her own sex, who was not even accused of having done anything to forfeit the mantle of kindness which every true woman instinctively throws around youth, caused a thrill of indignation. "Oh, yes! I noticed her," said Mrs. Desmonde; "the young lady who sits opposite Mr. Houston. Quite *distingué*, I remember." Mrs. Carson was slightly taken aback, but determined to do her duty bravely, and so went on to give the last touch, even to the shocking way with which the young woman "carried on" with Mr. Houston. Mrs. Desmonde had not observed it, and as she was not in the least concerned about what Mrs. Graham

did or did not do, the peculiarities of Genevieve Morrison, nor in fact any of the information which was being gratuitously offered, she decided that her immediate presence was required in the regions of the dry-goods stores.

An extremely good person would have made some allowance for Mrs. Carson, and in her thoughts would have said that perhaps the poor creature was the victim of hereditary tendencies, or that she merely judged others by herself, attributing motives that would have been her own under the same circumstances, or that she had been unfortunate in having always found people so much worse than they seemed, or that her mind had been given to coarse gossip for so long that it had lost all assimilating power for food of a different kind; a finished saint might have found some extenuating circumstances for even a confirmed scandal-monger, but Mrs. Desmonde did not claim to be a saint, only a miserable sinner, and so, without any circumlocution, she pronounced Mrs. Carson to be a vulgar, ignorant old woman. "And that daughter of hers is simply unbearable. Theoretically, she does not believe in original

sin, considering that a myth of the dark ages, a period which ended just about the time she was born; but practically her credence in the story of the unfortunate apple and its dire consequences is unwavering; she plainly thinks that the germs of wickedness have come down unfailingly to all mankind, or at least to all womankind," and with a vicious twirl at an obstinate lock of hair Mrs. Desmonde put on her bonnet and started in quest of the reseda gown.

The chance meeting of Sunday morning led to an appointment for Sunday afternoon, Genevieve promising to show Mrs. Desmonde her European views. "I haven't been to Europe for fifteen years, but I am going again soon," said the matron, and Genevieve replied, in a burst of frankness: "And I am going soon again, too; that hope is all that keeps me out of the insane asylum." Then, noting a rather startled look on Mrs. Desmonde's countenance, she continued: "I try not to be talking always about 'when I was in Europe,' but I think of it enough, for that was the happiest year of my life."

"I am afraid Miss Morrison does not know

what a great and glorious country America is," laughed Mr. Houston. "A young lady who will let some unhealthy ruins and a few miles of canvas scattered through the different art galleries outweigh Niagara Falls and the Yosemite, and the scientific possibilities as indicated in the line of agricultural implements and patent medicines, of her own land, is the victim of a neglected education. Mrs. Desmonde, you must snatch this brand from the——"

"Oh, you might as well say the burning," retorted Genevieve, as he stopped for a comparison.

"But the metaphor isn't appropriate on such a rainy day," expostulated the young man.

The "afternoon in Europe" was followed by various shopping expeditions with Mrs. Desmonde, and long chats over needlework, until Mr. Desmonde began to rally his wife on her new favorite.

"You are forgetting the exclusiveness of your early youth, my dear," he said teasingly.

"The word hasn't any meaning in a society which tolerates the Carsons and that Mrs. Tubbs. Besides, circumstances alter cases;

now in Baltimore we have the conditions for a high social standard, although even there mere money is getting to be the test of one's position, but in Ovington——"

"Why, I thought there were some very cultivated people in Ovington," interrupted Mr. Desmonde; "you've said so time and again yourself."

"Why, yes, so there are; Miss Genevieve Morrison is in Ovington now, and she is the most cultivated person in the place. She comes from fine families too, on both sides, and blood will tell, even if it does get into some rather shady channels. It would be hard to accept her father if he were living, but you see he is dead, and that makes all the difference."

"I dare say it does—to him."

"Anyway," went on Mrs. Desmonde, ignoring the interruption, "gambling isn't considered so dreadful in these days; just look at England and the Prince!"

"Suppose, my dear, you let me look at the evening paper instead."

It was after meeting her husband's quondam ward in the company of Mrs. Desmonde in



Fourth Street that Mrs. Watson remarked that evening, in the interval between the roast and the dessert: "Don't you think we ought to give a dinner or something to Miss Morrison; she really is a very pleasant girl, and Mrs. Desmonde seems to have taken quite a fancy to her."

Mr. Watson thought so; in fact, had been thinking so for a long time, and he vaguely wondered what connection there was between his wife's change of opinion and the appearance of Mrs. Desmonde and Miss Morrison down-town together. But he was wise enough to suppress his curiosity.

## VII.

AMONG the transients that came most frequently to the Windsor was a young commercial tourist whose sponsors in baptism, blind to æsthetic demands and the law of compensation, had inflicted Joel Jehosephat on an infant already named by fate a Stick. His father, with a grim sense of humor, nicknamed him Fattie. And as Fattie Stick he grew to manhood, passing through the mumps and the measles, croup, and whooping-cough—the usual stages of a well-regulated boyhood—with no setback save a very small scar won in honorable warfare with another boy who made fun of his name.

Fattie Stick was a shrewd little man, neither fat nor thin enough to give point to his patronymic. He was considered very valuable by the firm of coffee dealers in whose interest he traversed a certain section of Western country, known in commercial parlance as his "territory."

Among Fattie's other admirable qualities was

his haste in transacting business. He had been known to arrive in a town on one train, sell coffee to a dozen grocers, and leave on the next.

It was, therefore, an annoyance to him of more weight than it might have been to a less energetic man when he missed his train by about five minutes, and was thus compelled to stay over another day in Ovington.

Genevieve Morrison was standing at a window looking at nothing in particular, when the sight of a well-dressed, not ungraceful young man running down the street, and closely pursued by a sable porter carrying a valise, sent a ripple of amusement to her mobile countenance. If she had not recognized the panting Lincoln as an attaché of the Windsor, she might have thought it was the race of an escaping thief.

Intently watching the same race from a neighboring window were eyes set and hard, and giving character to a face marked by lines not altogether those of age. To Mrs. Graham the sight brought no gleam of humor. As the train went puffing out of the station—she could see it as

it passed the crossing—a sigh of relief escaped her, and a smile of deep satisfaction stole round her very pretty mouth. She laid down the opera-glasses through which she had scanned the field of operations, and proceeded to attire herself in her most becoming street costume; the widow carried off the palm for style at the Windsor.

Half an hour later she knocked at Genevieve's door, and with a bewitching, elderly-sister air, begged the girl to go with her for a stroll downtown.

"I am awfully busy," answered Genevieve. "I am trying to paint a Tabernacle veil to send away for Easter, but I should really like to go. I am always glad of an excuse for laziness. I have been standing at the window, being as lazy as possible, with no extenuating circumstances, as a lawyer would say." Genevieve pulled the widow into the room with girlish playfulness, and pushed her into a great easy-chair which she acknowledged to be personal property.

"Yes, I'll go," she said. "The day is so glorious, and to-morrow—well, nobody in the

West can say what to-morrow is going to be."

"Oh, how beautiful, how exquisitely beautiful those roses are!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, jumping up to examine the shimmering satin, blooming like a California rose garden under Genevieve's brushes.

"You paint so charmingly; I wish I knew how, and I should offer to help you; but I don't know one color from another on a palette, and when it came to mixing the sticky stuff that oozes out of those little tubes I should make the most startling combinations, I'm sure." Mrs. Graham's tones more than her words were apt to be in superlatives.

The couple sauntered along the principal business thoroughfares, stopping with provincial independence to examine an attractive window, or to debate over the bargains so alluringly displayed. Mrs. Graham usually sighted the bargains. Genevieve's talents did not lie in that direction; she generally knew what she wanted, always the best, and with characteristic directness she went where it was most likely to be found.

They bought a paper of pins, some thread, and a box of candy between them, and were just coming out of the confectioner's place when they ran quite against Mr. Stick. The young travelling man bestowed a prolonged stare on the widow, but gave no other sign of recognition.

"I thought he had left town!" ejaculated Mrs. Graham.

"Oh, did you see him, too, running for the train this morning?" queried Genevieve, smiling at the recollection of the race, and failing to see the look of annoyance on her companion's face:

"He must have missed it, after all!"

On returning to the hotel Mrs. Graham went directly to her room, complaining of a headache. She was subject to headaches which oftentimes kept her in seclusion, but otherwise their ravages were not evident, and some people were inclined to be doubtful in regard to them; but Genevieve was not of a sceptical turn of mind.

During the night the edge of a blizzard swept over the country, and the next day, Sunday, was

cold enough to congeal all but the warmest piety, so that a larger crowd than the usual Sunday gathering were hanging around the rotunda of the Windsor when Mr. Fattie Stick began to tell about a notorious divorce suit which had shocked all Omaha a year before. The case had been too much for even the most hardened of editorial consciences, and the Associated Press had been compelled to resort to asterisks. But no such reserve characterized Mr. Stick, and, as he found himself the centre of attraction, he ventured to add a few Zolaesque touches which the facts did not strictly justify.

"But her name wasn't Graham then," he said; "at least her husband's name was Ed Block."

Mr. Hubbard asked for a repetition of the story in private, and early on Monday morning Mrs. Graham was given a receipted bill for the current month's board, and told that her patronage at the Windsor was no longer desired.

The affair created a sensation, and by noon nearly everybody in the house was elaborating on the details, and discussing them with all the

bitterness which narrow-minded, good women, so-called, feel for women who are neither narrow-minded nor good.

Genevieve alone, busily painting in the solitude of her own room, heard nothing of the bomb which had so suddenly exploded. She did not go down to dinner, from a disinclination to change her painting blouse for a more conventional attire, but ordered a lunch brought to her room.

She was still painting when Mrs. Graham, heavy-eyed, and looking years older, came to the door. A womanly desire to stand as well as she could with the girl who had been her friend prompted the outcast to attempt an explanation. Finding that Genevieve was still in absolute ignorance of everything, Mrs. Graham instantly determined on a more pronounced rôle of injured innocence, feeling that fate, in one particular of the deplorable affair, had been kind to her.

She began by saying that she had received bad news, which would necessitate immediate departure and an indefinite absence, trusting to luck, which never deserted her for long, that



the innocent girl might never find out that the abrupt departure had not been voluntary.

Genevieve, at once all sympathetic concern, offered to assist her friend in packing, or in anything in which she could be of service.

"Thank you, dear; you are always so thoughtful, but I have already packed," answered Mrs. Graham, revolving in her mind just what to tell of her troubles, and how far she could count on the stability of first impressions to withstand the contradictory versions which would be given by the hostile women at the Windsor.

"I want to tell you something, Genevieve," she began. "I want you to think the best of me when I am gone. I would like to tell you of my troubles. I suppose you have seen that I am not a happy woman, although I have tried to keep my woes to myself. But you have become so dear to me; you are so superior to the vulgar horde here at the Windsor that I feel I can trust you. Some women, you know, are never so happy as when they have some other woman to tear to pieces with their venomous tongues."

Mrs. Graham was a dramatic talker.

"That Mr. Stick we met Saturday was an old friend of my husband's," continued the widow, "and I knew as soon as I saw him that he would say nasty things about me here. All men are not gentlemen, by any means!"

Mrs. Graham then recounted her wrongs with passionate fervor; told of her unhappy marriage, which had been forced upon her when she was a mere girl to save her father from bankruptcy, and how her dissolute husband had abused her until she could stand it no longer. It seemed just like a play to Genevieve, the more so when Mrs. Graham sobbed brokenly at the most touching points. All the depths of the girl's warm nature were stirred; for it made a very touching little story, and the slight drawback that scarcely a word of it was true did not detract in the least from its pathos.

The guests of the Windsor were just going to supper that evening, and the corridors were thronged, when the carriage for Mrs. Graham drew up at the ladies' entrance. The fugitive, closely veiled, and Genevieve, loyal to the last, passed through the crowd and were driven to the station. Genevieve was utterly ignorant

that, in manifesting her regard so publicly for the maligned victim of a hard fate, she was walking, figuratively, into the crater of a volcano. When she returned from the station half an hour later she called gaily to Mrs. Carson and her daughter, who were just entering the elevator, to wait for her. So intent was she on the tragedy in real life, of which she had just witnessed the last scene to be played in Ovington, that she did not notice how both women drew their skirts aside, as if to escape contamination, and that the faintest possible salutation was returned to her greeting.

"I have just been down to the station with poor Mrs. Graham," said Genevieve. "She received some bad news and had to leave suddenly. I am awfully sorry she has gone; I shall miss her so much—our rooms were in the same hall, you know. At first I didn't like her, but she improved on acquaintance." Miss Pearl Carson deliberately turned her back, and began chatting to Jim, a quadroon in brass buttons, whose strong arms controlled the elevator. Mrs. Carson, with a significant snort, entirely lost on Genevieve, answered: "Oh, yes; I be-

lieve you were quite intimate. I never myself become intimate with strangers, or allow my daughter to be. And as for Mrs. Graham—everybody knew from the start that she wasn't a respectable woman."

The elevator came to a halt, and the matron sailed out, closely followed by the Pearl of carefully guarded innocence.

Genevieve was simply stunned; the juxtaposition of ideas, more than the words which conveyed them, went through her like a stab. Had she, Genevieve Morrison, been subjected to the insolence of being told to her face that she had been intimate with a woman who was not respectable! She whitened to the lips; her feet and hands grew cold, and she trembled as if from a chill. It was the first direct insult she had received in all her life.

"What a fool I am to care for those vulgar women!" she said to herself fiercely; but the poison was in her nerves.

A viper can give a saint his death-wound, and Genevieve was neither a saint nor a heroine, but only a lonely, unprotected girl; and she had sense enough to realize her condition.

Like a flash the whole meaning of the Carsons' attitude came to her. As if a calcium light had been thrown on her inner consciousness, she understood that whatever vile imputation Mrs. Graham rested under, she, as Mrs. Graham's friend, was to share its odium.

"Oh, they are shameful, shameful! vulgar! low! Mrs. Graham was too good to touch their garments."

A card party had been arranged to take place that evening in the apartments of one of the regular boarders, and when Mrs. Carson and her jewel wended their way thither they found a half-dozen other women equally full of the day's sensation, and equally anxious to talk it over. The presence of Mr. Houston and two or three other gentlemen did not deter them from venting their virtuous indignation in the most emphatic phrases which propriety, stretched somewhat, would permit.

"What do you think?" croaked Mrs. Carson. "That Morrison girl, after having the brazen shamelessness to go with the woman to the station, actually had the audacity to speak to me this evening coming up in the elevator."

Mr. Houston was shuffling the cards, but he stopped suddenly with the pack clinched in both hands, and answered hotly: "You may be sure, Mrs. Carson, that either Miss Morrison has been deceived as to Mrs. Graham's true character, or else you have been. It might be well to hear Miss Morrison's version."

"Oh, you men are all alike," interposed one of the matrons who shared the Carsons' dislike to Genevieve. "Let a girl be young and half-way pretty, and you think she is an angel. I dare say Miss Morrison has cut her wisdom teeth—she knows what she is about. Birds of a feather flock together, you know"; and the woman laughed so maliciously that the young man longed to pitch her out of the window.

"Come, Houston, give us some cards—let the women fight it out among themselves," said Mr. Carson, who liked to assert himself in public.

"Of course, it is all well enough for Mr. Houston," retorted Mrs. Carson. "He is a man; but I have my daughter to consider, and a mother can't be too careful."

After delivering this aphorism, which no one doubted, she leaned back in her chair with a

sigh of maternal responsibility. "One thing I am determined on, though—Genevieve Morrison has got to leave our table, or else we shall be compelled to go elsewhere. I shall speak to Mr. Hubbard in the morning about it."

Mr. Houston finished the game, and then begging his host, who never played with women if he could avoid it, to take his hand, strode down to the next floor, the glow of an iron determination on his face, and knocked at Mrs. Desmonde's door.

He did not pretend that he was making merely a friendly call, or even apologize for coming so late—although it was nearer ten o'clock than nine. "Mrs. Desmonde," he said with energy, "I have come to ask you to show yourself a first century Christian, halo and all, in this confounded business—I beg your pardon—about Mrs. Graham. Mrs. Carson has mixed up Miss Morrison in the affair, and she is going\* to make no end of trouble if she is not prevented. Mrs. Carson and Miss Morrison never have liked each other—it didn't require a telescope to see that."

"Antipathetic temperaments, I suppose," an-

swered Mrs. Desmonde, but she gave no sign of encouragement to proceed.

"Mrs. Carson has just declared that she won't have Miss Morrison at her table for another meal, and even hints that either the young lady must be invited to take her departure, or else she will find other quarters."

"She won't do that—she likes the Windsor too well," Mrs. Desmonde replied drily.

"No, I don't think she will myself; but she can make life very disagreeable for Miss Morrison. Mrs. Carson is not a woman to hide her virtue under a bushel, and she is determined that all the world shall know of her ukase against this poor girl. There is no doubt that she intends to insist that Miss Morrison be transferred to another table, and she will do it as publicly as possible. Of course, I know that your table is strictly private——"

"Ah, I see! You want me to invite Miss Morrison to my table, do you?"

"It would be awfully good of you if you would," answered the young man, as gratefully as if he were asking a favor for himself.

"If Miss Morrison herself would take the



initiative, and refuse to go to the table with Mrs. Carson—they had some sort of scene in the elevator this evening, and that would give an excuse—it would spike the Carson artillery, don't you see, and save Miss Morrison some unpleasantness. You know, Mrs. Desmonde, that a girl like that can't cope with a woman like Mrs. Carson!"

Mrs. Desmonde thought for a minute, and then she said quietly: "Why, yes, I should be very willing to have Miss Morrison at our table; but I can't see why Mrs. Carson makes such a serious matter out of a trifle. Why, we were all more or less friendly with Mrs. Graham, and ten to one Genevieve Morrison has not heard anything about the scandal. She told me yesterday that she was going to paint all week. I'll go up and arrange the matter with Miss Morrison now," continued the matron, warming into enthusiasm in anticipation of her benevolent deed.

"You don't care, do you, Lawrence?" she broke off suddenly, remembering that her husband might be supposed to have some voice in the matter.

"Oh, my dear, don't mind me; do as you please, as you always do," answered Mr. Desmonde good-naturedly.

"Mr. Desmonde knows genuine good judgment when he sees it," lightly interposed Mr. Houston. "I am sure Miss Morrison can congratulate herself on having the benefit of a good example three times a day."

"You had better come over to our table and get the benefit of the example, too, Houston," said Mr. Desmonde.

"Mr. Houston doesn't need my example," answered Mrs. Desmonde hastily.

"I am willing to rest on my oars after having secured Mrs. Desmonde's good graces for Miss Morrison," replied the young man.

"And what made you Miss Morrison's champion?" inquired Mrs. Desmonde, with sudden seriousness, as if that view of the matter had just presented itself.

"That which makes every man who is half a man the champion of unprotected womanhood," replied Houston, with a flush mounting to his temples.

Mrs. Desmonde clapped her hands delightedly,

and cried, "Bravo! I should like to reward you on the spot for that speech. Would a glass of hot punch be accepted as a slight token of appreciation?"

Houston bowed with burlesque stateliness, and with his hand on his heart declared: "Appreciation from a kindred soul is reward enough for swimming the Hellespont, or scaling the Pyramids and reciting the Declaration of Independence on the summit."

After Mr. Houston had gone—he had stipulated, of course, that his name was not to be mentioned to Miss Morrison in connection with the Carson affair—Mrs. Desmonde, with the rising liking one feels for the object of one's benevolent impulses, mounted the stairs, and knocked at Genevieve's door.

Although not conspicuously a woman of tact, her rare delicacy of feeling saved her from blunders in unfamiliar situations.

She said at once that she had heard of the disagreeable encounter in the elevator with Mrs. Carson, and that to avoid a repetition of the unpleasantness, Genevieve must join her and Mr. Desmonde at their little table. "We should

both be delighted to have you in any case," she added, with the inborn courtesy of a gentlewoman.

"Oh, how good, how good you are!" exclaimed Genevieve passionately, the tears which she had been fighting proudly welling up and overflowing. "The sound of a kind word makes me—oh, you don't know—I was just feeling that I didn't have a friend in all the world," continued the girl brokenly and somewhat incoherently; but the elder woman understood. She stroked Genevieve's hair tenderly, without attempting to reply until the tears had been checked.

Mrs. Desmonde did not think it necessary to tell all she knew in regard to Mrs. Graham, but Genevieve understood enough to realize how imprudent she had been in yielding to an intimacy with a woman of whom she knew nothing, and to blush hotly at the thought of how valiantly she had championed a bad cause.

"Very true, I knew nothing of Mrs. Graham; but then she knew nothing of me either," said Genevieve with characteristic love of fair play.

"Ah, yes; but then Mrs. Graham was a

married woman of thirty-five, and you are a girl of twenty, and that makes a great difference."

They talked long and confidentially—that is, the elder woman received the confidences of the girl, until Mr. Desmonde sent up to know if Miss Morrison were ill, and could he do anything for her?

Whatever Mrs. Carson may have intended to say or do, the sight of Genevieve and Mrs. Desmonde, the next morning, seated together at the latter's table, and chatting gayly over an omelette, checkmated any active move. She said something to her daughter, and then four eyes were focussed in a prolonged stare. Genevieve returned the stare for a moment with cool insolence, and went on chatting to Mrs. Desmonde. During that day and the day following a few daring or unduly curious spirits ventured to hint to Mrs. Desmonde about the recent intimacy of Miss Morrison and the excommunicated widow; but that lady resolutely refused to infer anything from their remarks, and so the molehill, which might have grown into a mountain, was effectually levelled.

Genevieve hardly realized the extent of the favor Mrs. Desmonde had done her, for she had no conception of the accumulative force of a slander, or of the lengths to which virtuous propriety in the person of an evil-minded woman jealous of girlish superiority could go. But she was grateful to the kindly matron for taking her from the society of the Carsons, and for the mother-like affection which threw many little pleasures in her way. And she was ardent and impulsive in expressing her gratitude as in everything else.

"Really, Lawrence, I feel like an impostor when Genevieve says those pretty things to me, for I know that they belong by right to Mr. Houston," confided Mrs. Desmonde to her husband. "I never should have thought of interfering in that horrid affair, one way or the other, without the merest chance. I have so long made a practice of attending to my own affairs, and keeping out of these provincial scandals, and gossips, and bickerings, that the girl might have been given her bill and her *congé* like Mrs. Graham, and I never the wiser until after it was all over."

Mrs. Desmonde was aware that her husband was not paying very close attention to her, but she felt like talking; so she continued to talk. "I wonder if he is very much in love with her!"

"Who's in love with who?" asked Mr. Desmonde, with fine disregard of the objective case, looking up from his paper, but his mind still on the situation in Cuba.

"Mr. Houston with Genevieve, of course! Don't be stupid, Lawrence."

"My dear, what in the world makes you think of anything like that!" returned Mr. Desmonde. "Can't a man be half civil to a girl without being in love with her? You have matrimony on the brain."

"She doesn't give him any encouragement. I feel like shaking her at times," continued Mrs. Desmonde, ignoring her husband. "To get married is the best thing she can do. Why, it is the only thing for a girl in her situation. She can't go through the world with no home, and nobody to take care of her. It's positively like flying in the face of Providence to let so good a chance go by. She

ought to have one of those matchmaking mammas whom we read about. Just fancy——”

But whatever Mr. Desmonde was to fancy was left to his not at all active imagination, for at that moment Genevieve herself appeared at the door.



## VIII.

THE Watson dinner was still in abeyance, and the gossip about Mrs. Graham was dying a natural death, when all Ovington was put into a flutter of expectancy by the rumor that Mrs. Desmonde was going to give a large ball at the Windsor in honor of Miss Morrison.

"Did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Tubbs, clasping her fat jewelled hand to her breast, as she had been taught to do in the Delsarte class, "to express strong and sudden emotion." "To think of Mrs. Desmonde's giving a ball for old Matt Morrison's daughter! What's society coming to, anyway?"

Rumor became a reality in another week when the invitations were sent out, and the reality a disappointment to the few who were omitted. To be strictly just to Mrs. Desmonde's kind heart, the omissions were fewer than they would have been had she consulted her own inclinations. "There is plenty of

room; so I suppose I might as well have everybody," she said to her husband, with her pencil poised over a doubtful name.

"Oh, yes; pay off all your debts and start a big social balance at the same time. Some of the undesirables may prove angels in disguise one of these days."

"Oh, Lawrence, you are so unsatisfactory;" but the pencil remained idle.

Mrs. Desmonde had intended giving a large party for some time, and her making Genevieve its objective cause was merely the impulse of her natural benevolence. She saw a girl who, by no fault of her own, was entirely alone in the world and in danger of having her life marred simply for the want of the opportunities which belong naturally to youth, but which do not make themselves. There was no reason why Genevieve Morrison should not enjoy the advantages and pleasures, whatever they might be, of Ovington society; and as she had no daughters of her own, Mrs. Desmonde, believing that there were other ways besides foreign missions and hospital committees in which the Golden Rule could manifest itself, determined

to play the fairy godmother to the maiden whom circumstances had already placed under her protection.

On the night of the ball Genevieve, regal and radiant, glided swiftly down the corridors to take her place at Mrs. Desmond's side. The entire second floor of the Windsor had been given up for the occasion, and the magic of the nineteenth century, Money, had transformed the prosaic rooms into vistas of exquisite beauty. The soft light of a hundred hectic tapers and glowing electric lights beamed on banks of ferns and roses, palm-embowered retreats and a tempting expanse of waxed floor. The strains of the orchestra sent ecstatic thrills through the girl, a flush to her cheeks, a gladness born of the mercurial temperament of youth, to her heart. She wore a gown of Japanese crepe which fell in shimmering folds to the floor; she liked simplicity, but she wanted it combined with dainty elegance, and as she glanced at her own reflection in the drawing-room mirror she felt that the desired effect had been attained. Mrs. Desmond in ruby velvet, which swept away in a

court train over a petticoat flounced in point lace—the rarest in all Ovington—looked the high-bred matron she was, as she smiled sympathetically on her young *protégé*.

It seemed to Genevieve to be very late when the guests began to arrive. Nobody ever went early to a function in Ovington: it was considered unfashionable, un-Eastern to do so; and men yawned at the club, and women grew sleepy, waiting for the correct hour to arrive. Mr. Desmonde had more than once remarked that if two hours were taken off the end of the Ovington parties and tacked on to the beginning, the men who had to work for a living would find society more enjoyable; but his ideas, so far, had been without practical results. There was a unanimity of opinion as to the proper time at which to make one's appearance; so it happened, as it had often happened before, that all of Mrs. Desmonde's guests arrived at nearly the same moment, causing a regular crush in the dressing-rooms and on the stairway. But it was a brilliant company which at last began to pour into the ball-room. As the throng passed and repassed, a living kaleido-

scope of color, with graceful salutations from one, a witty sally from another, a merry laugh here, a pleasant word there, beautiful girls on the arms of princely looking men, sweet-faced dowagers, charming young wives, gallant bachelors—some very, very old—Genevieve's ideas of Ovington underwent a rapid and most decided change. At the same time she was perfectly conscious of the element which Mrs. Desmonde, had she not been the hostess, would have classed as the undesirables—women with their *bourgeoise* origin stamped in every gesture, narrow-minded, ignorant, commonplace; men insipid, and sometimes coarse. Recent wealth and ancient poverty touched hands; the gown from Paris had as a foil the simple muslin which had been put together by unskilled fingers at home; maidens from fashionable boarding-schools exchanged greetings with maidens who still played "Silvery Waves" and wrote a legible, round hand. Matrons who lived modest, homely lives were there in gowns that should not have been tolerated in a respectable house, blushing at their own attire, but heroically wearing their attenu-

ated bodices in ignorance that the extreme *décolleté* went out ten years ago. There were the wives and daughters of rich men—who began life as grocers, farmers, hack-drivers, hucksters—ignoring a timid little woman whom poverty had brought to the ball on the street car. Her husband, a talented young fellow, who was a clerk in Mr. Desmonde's bank, was talking to the Nestor of the Western Improvement Company, with a deference he might not have shown could he have looked into the future thirty years, and have seen himself a millionaire, and his wife giving a dinner to a peer, and the cut direct to a mere clerk.

It was only a little Vanity Fair, one of the million held night after night wherever civilization had gained a foothold. The assemblage was somewhat mixed, but Genevieve, being a sensible girl in the main, understood perfectly that in a country and age where the wheel of fortune is given more and more to capricious turns, there must be a social latitude unknown and unfathomable under more conservative conditions.

“For dinners and small affairs one can invite only congenial people, but for a ball one's

whole list must be included, else there is the risk of wounding feelings needlessly," Mrs. Desmonde had explained in one of their discussions about the party.

Genevieve became at once the belle of the evening. She liked to dance, and she liked to talk, and she was not averse to Washington punch, even when it was handed to her by a youth who wore a red necktie with a dress-coat. She would have preferred more diversity in the conversation between dances, had she been given a choice. She grew somewhat tired after a while of saying that "she liked Ovington"; "she was having a good time"; "she was a stranger in the place"; "she was fond of dancing"; "she thought the decorations in the Lotus Club artistic and beautiful"; "she had recently returned from Europe"; "great improvements had taken place in twelve years in Ovington."

For a change, she was leaning against a pillar near Mrs. Watson—that lady was now overwhelmingly gracious—and saying nothing, when Mr. Houston approached from the other end of the room, and carried her off to an embrasure

which they themselves had merrily christened "Lovers' Retreat." It was merely a bay window, screened off from the ball-room by palms and festoons of smilax, in which had been placed a sofa and a bit of statuary that passed for Egyptian.

"It is safe to accuse the ancient Egyptians of almost anything, without fear of contradiction or of being haunted by the ghost of a mummy; nobody ever heard of a mummy with a ghost!" Mr. Houston had commented, when he went by special invitation, with Mrs. Desmonde and Genevieve, to inspect the decorations.

The ball-room had been partially deserted for the overbalancing attractions of the supper table; the orchestra was playing "My Queen Waltzes"; and Mr. Houston, who was not unreasonable, felt that he could not have a more auspicious moment for asking a girl to be queen of his heart. Murmurs came from the cosey retreat, but there were no curious ears to hear them.

"Oh, it's all so sudden; besides, I have made up my mind to go to Europe in the spring."



“Very well; my mind is made up to go to Europe in the spring, too; or, at least, I can make it up that way, or any other way you like. We can be married next month, and sail just as soon as the winter storms are over.”

“Oh, we can't be married until——” and then Genevieve stopped, overcome by all that her answer implied.

Half an hour later, when the couple emerged from the retreat, the young man seemed to be urging a point eagerly, but the girl shook her head and replied: “No, no—I couldn't possibly get ready—not until after Easter.”

## WESTGATE'S PAST.

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JOHN WESTGATE is a man with a history. He does not often refer to it in the presence of his children, because his daughter, Helen, aged fourteen, who goes to a select day-school in charge of Visitandine nuns, and is beginning to have nice little social prejudices, is sensitive on the subject.

But when Helen is off at school, or at the Monday dancing-class, or at the riding academy, or practising scales on the piano, or safely tucked away in a canopied brass bed in her dainty room, a Parian marble Immaculate Conception keeping watch from a pretty lace-draped altar, her father and mother often talk over the episode and make little jokes about it. And carefully put away in Mrs. Westgate's writing-desk are some curious relics—a tintype of a long-haired youth in a coat severely clerical,

a gilt-edged copy of "The Pilgrim's Progress," with the date of a Christmas ever so long ago, inscribed on it, some faded rose petals pressed between the leaves, and a bundle of letters written in a boyish scrawl on coarse, blue-lined paper. Helen would have elevated her straight, black eyebrows at such unæsthetic keepsakes, and would have been mildly horrified at the letters. Little Miss Westgate writes her letters only on the finest and heaviest white paper, and her pictures are taken by a fashionable photographer who never poses any one at less than eight dollars the dozen. And Helen's mamma is now an eminently correct matron whose gowns and visiting-list and accent are all quite in the mode. For the Westgates have prospered amazingly in the last ten years, and money, as necessary to a social footing as a foundation is to a house, has been pouring into their coffers in a steady little stream until they are, if not exactly rich, so far removed from poverty that the bravest sort of wolf would never dream of venturing near their quartered-oak door.

It is known to their intimates that the story has to do with Father Ryan, the dignified and

eloquent pastor of St. Paul's, and Mr. and Mrs. Westgate before they were married. Father Ryan is often a guest at the Westgate table, and is first in the affections of the Westgate children after their father and mother. One of the boys is named for him, and the clergyman takes the kindly interest in their dispositions and studies and plans—apart from the fact that their parents saved his life—natural to one who had baptized them all and listened to their childish sins both in the confessional and out of it. Helen is his favorite, probably because she is the first-born, but he has not hesitated to tell her the plainest of truths about her temper, and often asks her if she knows that the devil is the father of pride. And the little maid loves and trusts him, and is never offended except when he refers before company to the time when her father was a preacher.

Mr. Westgate looks anything but the preacher now. Even his wife finds it hard at times to identify the youth of the tintype with the clever lawyer and shrewd man of the world who hurries off every morning from his luxurious breakfast-table to his tenth-story office down-town,

and who takes the keenest interest in horse-races and belongs to an evening whist club.

Although Mrs. Westgate has come to laugh over her keepsakes, there is sometimes a wistful look in her beautiful eyes as she puts them away tenderly, for they bring back an episode that came too near to being tragedy to be remembered altogether without pain.

Somewhat less than a hundred miles from the wholly imaginary line that separates Missouri from the State of *the bent, smoky water*, Arkansas, one who is persevering may find the village of Milton. As it is not on the railroad, the time required to reach it from a given point depends on one's horse and the roads. If it has been raining hard, as it can rain in Arkansas on slight provocation, the chances are that the stranger will not reach it at all.

Milton is not a beautiful village. There is a depressing uniformity about the straight lines of the houses and an equally depressing uncertainty about the crooked lines of the streets. And paint has not been lavishly used except on the town hall, the opera house,

and Jim Cassidy's saloon—where it was paid for by taxation, direct or indirect, of the citizen. There are four churches, controlled by as many denominations, and when there is not a revival, a fair, or a feud at one of them, Milton society is distinctly dull.

Fifteen years ago the place was very much the same as it is to-day. Some of the houses may be a trifle dingier, gates may creak harshly that once opened with hospitable alacrity. The Methodists have put a steeple on their church, the Baptists have taken a mortgage off theirs. A few more tombstones loom up in ghostly fairness in the little graveyard, a few more baby faces have come to gladden their mothers' hearts and to grow up to take the places of the men and women that are gone.

The Milton boy of fifteen years ago, who goes back a bearded man for a glimpse of the old home—the village whose ugliness and sordidness and commonplace inactivity he has idealized into something sweet and beautiful and near to nature's heart—will feel a hot little lump in his throat and a mistiness about the eyes as he catches sight of Picket Hill in the

east and the familiar outlines come into view. And the faces that he used to know, furrowed and weather-beaten by the passing years, have a place in his memory all their own. But he will not remain long, and it will be many years before he cares to repeat the visit.

In the largest of the houses standing a little apart from the village, in the shadow of Picket Hill, John Westgate had waxed from a lusty baby into a sturdy youth with widening ambitions and a well-developed will. He was an orphan who had been adopted by his father's only brother and his wife—a childless couple who received the baby gratefully as an answer to prayer, and loved and petted him to the full of their kindly, middle-aged hearts.

William Westgate was among the wealthiest—or the least poor—of the Miltonians. He had a good farm, three miles from the village, and a large general store in Main Street, besides owning his own home and having money in a St. Louis bank. He was an honest, God-fearing citizen, a deacon in his church, and a pillar of the commonwealth. He was well content with his own sphere in the world, but for his

nephew—who was clever like all the Westgates, he would have said—he had exalted ideas. It was the dream of his life to make a clergyman of John. In the eyes of the uncle the hand of Providence plainly pointed to this consummation.

The pastor was getting old, and would soon have to go on the retired list; and then what more fitting than for the Reverend John, gifted and good, and a nephew of one of the oldest deacons, to step into the vacant place? The boy could thus have his career without going away from home for it, and during the week-days he could attend to his uncle's property. The deacon's thoughts often strayed lovingly to this happy future, and then he would take down his worn Bible and read softly to his wife, as her knitting-needles flew in and out of the bright wool, the story of the youthful Samuel in the temple, or the songs of the shepherd-king of Israel.

The boy took kindly enough to the idea. For one thing, he wanted to go away to school—he hardly dared to dream of a real college—and in order to become a minister of the sort



he intended to be it was absolutely essential to have an education. He had convinced his uncle of this, and it was settled that when he had finished the rather limited course of the Milton district school he was to go to Finetta University, entering its doors as raw material to come out the finished ministerial product.

The young candidate thought it well to have some preliminary practice, and it became his favorite pastime to assemble his schoolmates under a grove of trees near the schoolhouse, and from a convenient stump to preach to them some thrilling discourses on the evils of dog-fights, the wickedness of playing truant, and the positive atrociousness of letting a girl carry off the spelling-match prize. He held revivals, and the boys, entering into the spirit of the fun, would shout lustily at the top of their shrill young voices, and respond to his exhortations with groans and deep amens. A log was dubbed the mourners' bench, and the girls who would not "shout" were invited to that place of penitence. One rosy-cheeked sinner in particular was the object of the deepest concern to the boy preacher.

"Deacon Gibson," he would say with comical gravity to a shock-headed youth with a freckled nose, "will you exhort Sister Clara Tidwell to the mourners' bench? and Brother Brown, have the kindness to put away your jack-knife; it is not seemly on this occasion."

Then a lisping, mischief-loving treble would pipe up, "Pleath, Parthon Wethgate, Thister Kitty Thimmth ith chewing gum."

"Sister Simms, take your place with Sister Clara Tidwell on the mourners' bench," the embryo parson would command sternly.

Sometimes the girls would go readily, and sometimes they would not, their actions generally depending on the caprice of Clara Tidwell.

And when she was recalcitrant, the preacher would lose his temper. "I say, Clara, do you think it's nice to be so mean? Who sharpens your pencils, I'd like to know; and brings you apples and gives you candy and a manicure set for Christmas?"

"Well, you can keep your apples and your candy, John Westgate; and I can sharpen my own pencils—or Charlie Atkins will do it for me," the little beauty would retort hotly.

At the mention of Charlie Atkins the boy would rage inwardly, but he liked Clara too well to risk her further displeasure; so with true diplomatic insight he would change his tactics.

"You know I like you a million times better than Charlie Atkins does—I'd, I—pshaw, Clara! I think you might mourn for a fellow when he asks you to." And then Clara would smile and show her dimples and walk leisurely over to the log, and there with Kitty Simms and the other mourning sinners, sit contentedly, working dumpy little cupids in red floss on a bureau scarf.

These meetings might have continued indefinitely had not an envious outsider told of them to the teacher, who promptly stopped them—threatening dire punishment on the preacher and his deacons. It took the combined petitions of the school to keep him from reporting the irreverence to William Westgate.

"We didn't mean any harm, you know," pleaded John. "I don't mind any punishment for myself, but it would nearly kill my uncle if he thought that I was in any trouble at school."

The culprit was kept in that evening and made to copy a page of the dictionary. He was feeling so wounded and sore and deserted when, his task finished at last, he turned into the solitary path leading past the grove where the meetings had been, that he forgot how hungry he was and how tired. But as he came within a few feet of the mourners' bench an unreasoning delight filled his heart, for Clara Tidwell rose up from behind the log and advanced towards him, holding out a piece of pie and an apple. "I thought you'd be hungry," she said shyly, presenting her offerings. There was a tremble in his voice which he tried hard to conceal, and his eyes shone with boyish gladness. At Deacon Tidwell's gate—the girl's father was a deacon, too, although apt to relapse into the wrath of the ungodly—he blurted out: "Clara, you know I'm to go away to school when I'm a little older; but you won't like any other chap while I'm away better than me, will you?"

"Oh, you silly boy," laughed the little maid, and ran up the flower-bordered walk to the house.

In due time John Westgate went to the "University"—an institution doing heroic work under adverse circumstances—and filled the heart of his uncle with fondest pride by carrying off the prize for oratory during his first year, and winning twenty-five dollars in a history contest at the close of the second.

But the vacation of the third year was black, for the young man had dared to tell his uncle that he did not feel any call to be a minister, and that his heart was set on being a lawyer.

The blow to the old man was heavy indeed.

A lawyer, a rascally lawyer—this for the child of his hopes, the anointed of the Lord—the Deacon was given to Scriptural phrases—to become a godless sinner, a defender of cheats and rogues from the just penalty of their crimes! Never!

"No money of mine will ever make a lawyer of you, John," said the old man grimly. "You must be bewitched."

All the week the youth went about silently, feeling as if under a pall, and upbraiding himself for his ingratitude to the dear old man who had been a father to him in everything but

name. And when the next Sunday came and he heard himself prayed for in church, heard his uncle, with a quaver in his voice, beseech the Lord to keep His servant in the way he should go, and not let him be led after strange idols; to give words of wisdom to his lips and a wall of prudence about his heart, John felt like a wretch on the brink of an awful fate. So he told his uncle that he was ready to go on with his theological studies, and with this compact he returned to Finetta University.

There was much rejoicing on the part of his congregation when John Westgate came back to his boyhood's home as their pastor. And the young man was honestly intent upon filling his place worthily. He had his dreams of temperance leagues and reading clubs and literary societies and university extension; and he tried to carry them out—to be a leader of his people into a higher and better life.

And a dearer dream had come true. Clara Tidwell, who had also been off to school, had been loyal to her young lover, and on his return to Milton they were formally engaged, with the willing consent of their respective families.

Everything pointed to a peaceful, uneventful, happy life. They spent golden hours together. John read aloud the "Vicar of Wakefield," and Clara, openly contemptuous of the vicar's wife, was sweetly enthusiastic over the gentle-hearted vicar. The summer days passed, and early in the coming spring they planned to be married.

It was among the young minister's duties to go, on one Sunday in each month, to preach in a little church near a mill settlement, some five miles from Milton, where a voracious saw-mill was eating up the stately pines that covered the surrounding hills. There was a shifting population, and the nearest clergymen attended to its spiritual needs.

Westgate was on his way to fill this appointment, jogging along on horseback, and reciting bits of "Paradise Lost" from memory, when at the crossroads, midway between Milton and Greenville, he was startled by a vigorous "hallo."

He reined in his horse and waited for the stranger to overtake him. The minister recognized the newcomer at once as a Catholic priest and an Irishman, from his Roman collar and his brogue.

"Pardon me, I am on my way to Cutler's mill," explained the priest, "and I am not sure of the route. Can you kindly tell me which of these roads I am to take?"

"I am going to the mill myself, and, if you don't object to company, we can ride along together," responded Westgate.

And thus it came about that the priest and the parson entered the settlement together, apparently on the most cordial terms.

Like Westgate, Father Ryan, too, was just beginning his ministerial career. After six months as an assistant in a big city parish, he had been sent to Arkansas to take charge of some dozen missions scattered over two counties. As he wrote to one of his classmates: "My parish is as large as a toy German kingdom, and I have jurisdiction over six churches—kindly omit to ask any inconvenient questions as to the number of my people or the extent of my revenues. The blue dome of heaven is my canopy, and a retired army horse my throne. The distance from my headquarters—my cathedral church, so to speak—to my farthest mission is forty miles in the summer



when the weather is pleasant, and a thousand in winter with the mercury touching bottom."

As it chanced that young Westgate and Father Ryan had appointments on the same Sunday at the mill, they frequently found themselves in each other's company on the way. They tacitly avoided all discussions of religious differences. The minister, indeed, had been troubled with some vague scruples of conscience as to whether he ought to let pass such glorious opportunities for planting the seed of a purified faith in his companion's soul; but since the priest evidently had no such scruples on Westgate's account he washed his hands, figuratively speaking, from blame. It seemed curious to him at first to hear the priest—the sinister agent of a foreign potentate—talk so readily about the situation in Venezuela, and to give his theory as to why the soil on one side of the river is black and rich, and on the other red and poor—just as any ordinary man might talk. And it was plain from some remarks that Father Ryan let drop that he regarded murder and perjury with quite as much horror as did the average American citizen.

Being a sensible youth on the whole, Westgate speedily decided that the priest was merely a good Christian minister, bent on doing his duty, and as far removed from plots and ways that are dark as he was himself.

Westgate's career might have continued indefinitely in this uneventful way, but for an accident, or, as the young man put it, a direful visitation.

Father Ryan lived in Greenville, an old town of some local importance, about ten miles from Milton and five miles from Cutler's Mill, the nearest railroad station.

To Greenville there came in the early spring an unfortunate wretch named O'Brien, who was loudly heralded and warmly welcomed as a convert from Romanism and an ex-priest. Handbills and advertisements announced his lecture, and his subject, "Horrors of the Confessional," promised entertainment highly spiced.

His social sponsors in the community had some uneasy moments about their new brother when rumors became certainties that he loved to look on the wine when it was red, or even on good plain whiskey; and that the florid color

of his nose was not caused by overwork. But they, like charitable men, palliated his weakness, because he confessed his sin with tears of penitence—real tears and sham penitence—and bewailed it as one of the awful habits contracted when he was in the bondage of Rome.

As O'Brien's coming had been announced some weeks in advance, Father Ryan thought that it might be just as well in the interval to look up the ex-reverend's record. It was the old story of drunkenness, insubordination, suspension, spite, downfall, and religion for revenue only.

Reports of his lecture had reached Greenville which showed it to be of so indecent a character, and so grossly false, that Father Ryan, as pastor of Greenville, felt it incumbent upon himself to do something to neutralize the harm and the scandal which would follow it. He prepared a concise biography of O'Brien, exposed the falsity of the lecture, and offered his brochure to the Greenville paper for publication. It was refused; whereupon the zealous priest again presented it as an advertisement. Again it was refused. This aroused the hot

blood of the young Celt; he took his article to a job-printing office, ordered a thousand handbills struck off, and had them distributed freely in Greenville and Milton. Having done what he could, he left the result in the hands of Providence. He warned his congregation against any acts of violence, reiterating that the best refutation of the renegade's calumnies would be the purity and sobriety of their own lives. But this course seemed entirely too tame for some of them, and Jim Cassidy, the saloon-keeper of Milton, and, in the eyes of the Miltonians its representative Catholic, a man who went to church at Christmas and Easter and had not troubled the confessional since he was married ten years before, was particularly loud in his indignation, and spoke openly of giving O'Brien a welcome to Arkansas that he would not be likely to forget.

Cassidy's "zeal" spread rapidly, and when the eventful evening arrived there was a goodly showing of Catholics, or such as called themselves by that name, banded together in the back of the hall. O'Brien had not proceeded very far in his lecture—a lecture which made

even the most stolid wince and wish that he had left his wife at home—when there was a slight commotion in the audience, and in a moment turnips, eggs, and onions were flying thick and fast, some of them hitting the lecturer, and some of them knocking off lamp-chimneys and grazing the grizzly locks of sober hearers sitting well toward the front; while the malodorous fumes of the eggs seemed likely to empty the hall in short order. Women began to scream and the men to clinch their fists, and before any one had quite realized the situation there was a regular riot, with all that the word implies. The fray did not last long, for the Catholics were outnumbered five to one, and were easily put to flight. There was much broken glass and damaged best coats, not a few bruises, and more than one black eye; but the most serious injury was to Deacon Tidwell, Westgate's father-in-law elect, who, in attempting to climb out over the back of the seats, had slipped and broken his arm.

Naturally the disgraceful affair became the absorbing topic of the day. Everywhere one might hear philippics on the outrages of for-

eigners and the liberty of free speech, sandwiched with bits on the public schools and the rights of the great American people. The wave of popular wrath grew in volume until it threatened to submerge the community. Ministers took the riot for texts of sermons, and Washington and the Pilgrim Fathers were hurled indiscriminately at the Inquisition and Philip of Spain. Rural editors, who had been contented to puff their pipes and scissor editorials from their metropolitan exchanges on the evacuation of Egypt and the Orders of Barlow, threw away their pipes and wrote long articles with red-hot pens on the menace to free speech. It was like a Bach fugue, with theme and counter-theme taken up by one set of professional agitators after another until the whole country was in an uproar. Greenville had not felt so important since the day it was christened. The grand jury promptly indicted the disturbers that had been identified, and some that had not been.

On the crest of the popular wave "The Sons of Liberty" thought that they saw their chance to ride into an enviable prominence.

The S. O. L. was an organization formed a few years before as a sort of revival of the old Know-Nothing party of an earlier epoch. Their political father was a candidate for Congress who had feared defeat through the votes of the mill-hands, naturalized foreigners, solidly pledged to the opposition. The Sons had not been given much scope for their latent genius, because there was practically nothing for them to do. There were but few Catholics, and the "foreigners" had mostly been born on American soil. To organize to fight such a pitiful minority bordered on the ludicrous. But now they thought they heard the goddess Opportunity knocking at their door. Their president called a special meeting, at which there were much fiery eloquence and potential bravery, with many mixed metaphors and hopelessly disagreeing nominatives, and much good beer, and some pungent cigars.

The hottest wrath must have a definite object at which to hurl its fusillades, if it is to keep up to its own standard of intensity. To the leaders of public opinion in the Greenville-Milton community, a handful of mill-hands and

day-laborers, led by a saloon-keeper, were entirely inadequate to the occasion. It was a masterly stroke on the part of the S. O. L. when they made Father Ryan the target. All at once everybody seemed to know beyond a doubt that the blame for the riot belonged wholly to the priest. There were hoarse murmurs and dark threats rife, and people went about with bated breath anxious for the next act in the drama.

It was at this point that a committee from his church waited on John Westgate and laid before him their views as to the burning necessity of a sermon from him on the dangers lurking in "their midst." No rural speaker ever fails to bring down at least one "in our midst" during his discourse. It nettled John that their suggestion took rather the tone of command than of request. It was out of the question, as the committee would have said, for men who remembered John Westgate as a barefooted boy, playing ball with their own sons, fishing in the creek, or milking his uncle's cows, to be as deferential to him as they might have been to an older man and a stranger. They were



very proud of their pastor, paid his salary willingly, and had painted the church in his honor, but they were not going to stand any nonsense from the boy.

Although the young man was secretly sure of his right to choose his own subjects, he was nothing loath to preach on the absorbing topic of the day. It was a theory of his that a minister ought to be in the vanguard of his people in all movements, whether intellectual or spiritual; that he ought to be, by the fact of his position, a deeper thinker and a more philosophical historian than the rank and file of humanity. Westgate assented gracefully to the committee, but begged for time. He did not mean to get up and give a mere demagogue's exhortation. His effort was to be well thought out and well put together.

The committee accepted this point of view readily enough.

"Only don't be too long about it, John," put in MacDougall, a sandy-haired Scotsman, with a liking to manage affairs in his own way. "You see, a mighty fine cake can be spoiled by the keeping, and I'm thinking a sermon's much

like a cake. Bake and serve hot," he concluded, and his companions chuckled in various keys at his unsuspected wit.

The Sunday of Westgate's great sermon dawned fair and fresh and beautiful.

The young man arose early, and, dressing quickly, went out for a long walk before the village was yet awake from its usual seventh-day slumbers. There was a dewy sweetness in the air, and the roses were blooming luxuriantly, their fragrance reminding him in some dreamy, far-off way of the gardens of Cashmere, of Abydos, of Eden before the Fall. He turned his steps almost unconsciously in the direction of Deacon Tidwell's, and there was a half-formulated wish that he might see Clara. He was nervous and unsettled, elated one moment at the prospect of triumphant approval, and downcast the next at the greater chance of unqualified censure. He would not flinch from his duty, but he longed, as many a strong man has longed, for a little human sympathy. There is much of the child in every heart no matter how many years have been marked on the hour-glass of one's life.

When John came near to Deacon Tidwell's gate his pulses began to beat in the most lawless way, for out in the yard, daintily holding up her skirts to escape the heavy grass dripping with dew, was Clara cutting roses, great masses of them; they lay in luxurious, sweet-scented piles on the grass. Westgate with vigorous strides came up the gravelled walk.

"Oh, John, how you frightened me!" said the girl looking guiltily at the roses. "Why aren't you buried in thought over your sermon instead of tramping around town at this unheard-of hour? Don't leave the walk or you'll get your Sunday suit ruined; the grass is soaking wet," she called across a barricade of dewy rose-bushes.

"The morning is so enchanting, and—I am collecting my thoughts. Besides, I believe I wanted to see you," answered the young man courageously.

"Whatever made you think that *I'd* be out at such an hour? *I* haven't any thoughts to collect. There isn't a soul up in the house, not even Dilsey."

"Well, since you *are* out, won't you give me

a few moments from your roses? I know I'm not as beautiful as a rose, but——"

"What an idea! Indeed you are not. Why do you want to see me?"

"Don't I always want to see you, sweetheart?" temporized the young man.

"Oh, then it is merely on general principles!" retorted Clara. "I hope my daddy won't see you, for he'd think it was awful for a minister to be talking to a girl before church when he ought to be reading his Bible or pondering over his sermon. And such a sermon, too!"

It was one of the unwritten laws of Milton that a young minister was never to accompany a maiden to church, although he was at perfect liberty to escort her home afterwards.

"I hope you won't be disappointed in my sermon, Clara. I am afraid—perhaps you won't like it."

"If there is any one disappointed in it, it will not be I, John," said the girl, advancing towards her lover with her arms laden with the long-stemmed roses.

"I am getting roses for the church," she

explained, blushing slightly, but thinking it well to confess boldly since she had been caught in the act. "I want the pulpit to look festive in honor of the occasion."

John took her in his arms and kissed her. "Ah, Clara, sweet, there is no one in the world like you!"

Presently he said: "I am anxious about my sermon. I want to please Uncle William and—everybody, but I want to do my duty, too."

"Why, John, how strangely you talk! As if everybody didn't want you to do your duty," answered Clara, looking surprised.

"Yes, but some people have set ideas about things, you know. There has been a precious lot of nonsense talked about the riot, and about other things, too. You'll always believe in me, Clara, won't you?"

"Why, you dear old John, of course I will! Father and Deacon Westgate haven't any call to dictate to you about your sermon. If they don't like it let them get up and preach a better one."

"My loyal little Clara!" murmured the young man. Then he kissed her again, and went on

his way, wearing a rose on his coat lapel not far from his heart.

Westgate's church was crowded long before the hour for service. It was evident that three ministers in Milton that day would preach to comparatively empty pews. The S. O. L. were out in full force, and the oldest members of the church had an air of proud proprietorship in the occasion. A few outsiders had brought their most critical attitude, and some envious ones were hoping to find something at which to cavil—there is an evil side to human nature that sometimes shows itself even under the most pious circumstances. The deepest interest was manifest on every countenance.

There is no stillness so intense as the stillness of an excited throng; there is nothing to compare with it, unless it be the stillness of a vast prairie just before a cyclone.

Westgate was somewhat pale when he ascended his pulpit, but gave no other evidence of emotion. He read out the opening hymn and led in prayer in much his usual way. Some of the deacons were tempted, in view of the unusual interest of the occasion, to call out,

"Cut it short, John, cut it short," feeling that the Lord would be just as well pleased, and the congregation much better, for the sermon to begin at once.

The minister announced for his text the mighty commandment given to Moses amid the thunders of Mount Sinai :

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor !*

It seemed rather a strange text, the people thought, in view of the nature of the expected sermon.

Westgate began temperately in clear, easy tones. He introduced a few pyrotechnics about Plymouth Rock and persecution for conscience's sake, deplored the riot that had so recently convulsed the community, and then hurled his thunderbolt.

He declared that if any provocation could be great enough to palliate a riot, then the Catholics of that community could plead that provocation.

O'Brien, an unfortunate, drunken wretch, who had sullied the pure ears of the women of Greenville and Milton with his vile words, and

had foully aspersed the fair fame of his own spiritual mother, the Church in which he had been born and reared, had lied to his audience, lied in his every assertion. He went on to give a history of the man, abridged from Father Ryan's handbill, and showed by copious extracts from Catholic books that every part of the lecture was false—"false as hell," he cried, and some good mothers in Israel thought that their pastor was actually swearing.

The silence was ominous as the sermon proceeded, until the strain was broken at last by an unmistakable hiss. And in a moment the hisses were multiplied from every corner of the crowded edifice. Westgate flushed as if a sudden blow had struck him, and then, regaining his self-possession, went on with his sermon.

"And I, as a Christian minister in this community, who will have to answer to a higher tribunal than the public opinion of Milton, would be derelict in my duty did I meanly let such calumnies of a Christian denomination pass unchallenged. Yes, my people, Christians—separated they may be from us by ages and



epochs of advancement and doctrinal differences—but Christians like ourselves.

“And I wish to say just here that my friend and brother clergyman, Father Ryan, had no more to do with the riot at Greenville than I had—no more to do with it than the child unborn!”

Clara Tidwell looked up, her brown eyes shining, her whole soul speaking through them of adoring love for her hero. And no one realized as she did what grand heroism there was in the little words, “my friend and brother clergyman, Father Ryan.” No one not familiar with the hereditary prejudices of a little isolated rural Protestant community can ever quite comprehend just what the defence of the priest really meant.

Clara tried to give the young defender a reassuring smile. She meant it to say: “How grand you are, how much I love you—more than I have ever loved you before! How I long to crush under my feet each brutal wretch who is hissing you! Would that I could go out with harps and cymbals like Miriam to meet you!”

She glanced furtively at her father as he sat

bolt upright, rigid, stern, his massive jaws as fixed as granite, and at her mother, a delicate, shrinking little woman who looked ready to cry.

And when the preacher, rushing madly on to his fate, declared that each and every one in that congregation had consciously or unconsciously broken God's own commandment—that they had borne false witness against their unoffending Catholic neighbor, the last straw had fallen. Deacon Tidwell could stand no more. He arose with an authoritative "Come," and his wife meekly obeyed. Not so his daughter Clara.

"Come, Clara," he snorted, but the girl sat tense and motionless.

"Come, I say! Come, or I'll drag you out," he repeated, seizing her wrist with a grip of iron in his sound hand. His left arm was still in its plaster-of-paris case. But with one arm he was quite strong enough to drag the girl bodily from the church, and she knew it; besides, she did not want to make a scene, nor did she want to hurt her father's crippled arm in a resistance. It seemed best to go quietly.

She got up, head bent down, cheeks scarlet, eyes flashing, and followed her parents, mentally praying that John would not see her go.

John, alas! saw but too well.

"Woman's loyalty!" mocked a pitiless demon in his brain.

As his eyes rested on the retreating figure, they took that hunted, despairing, agonized look that seemed to say, "You, too! you, too, desert me! you, my heart's idol, you to fail me in the hour of my greatest need!" A knife with a thousand blades was rending his soul.

He regained his self-control and went on bravely to the end. Then, without any concluding hymn or prayer, he left his pulpit never to enter it again.

No one came forward to shake hands with him, and there were none of the little amenities usual to the occasion. The preacher walked firmly down the aisle, avoiding the sorrowful faces of his uncle and aunt, and went home.

Although Clara had left the church so quietly she made the homeward march stormy indeed.

"I am going right over to Deacon Westgate's and tell John that you forced me to go! It was

a shame, shame, shame, to treat him as you did. And those cowardly hisses! John knew what he was saying! He spent days and days over his sermon. If that O'Brien lied I should think you'd want John to tell you so—that you'd be glad to know the truth."

The girl went to her room and fairly tore off her pretty spring bonnet, moving with the quick, clear-cut tread of a determined woman thoroughly aroused. Her father followed her, and stood in the doorway, his massive form almost filling it.

"And so you are going over to Westgate's, are you?" he said with a sound very like a snort. "You are going to see the sneaking traitor! I don't think you will, my girl. You can give me the young man's ring and his presents, and I'll see him for you. My daughter ain't agoing to keep company with such as John Westgate!"

And before the girl had quite realized his purpose he had thrown her on her knees and forcibly removed her engagement ring. Then he hunted around until he had found "The Pilgrim's Progress," a vivid blue plush

writing-portfolio, which both John and Clara in the iron age of their artistic development thought beautiful, and the other little mementos from John, heaping them roughly together on the carpet just outside the girl's door.

"So you side with the men who nearly murdered your father, do you?" he said, standing over the spoils of war. "Well, maybe you'll change your opinion if you think about the matter long enough. You can stay in your room until you can see things in their true light. When you've about made up your mind that John Westgate and Priest Ryan and Jim Cassidy ain't as much to you as your own father, you can tell Dilsey, and I'll let you out," and before the girl's furiously astonished eyes he locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

Presently from her window Clara saw, through scalding tears, her father going down the walk with a little bundle.

"John, John, surely you will know that it is not I," sobbed the young girl. Her agony, as she alternately dramatized her lover's scorn of her faithlessness and her own ruined life with-

out him, was one of those mental phases that sear character and rend the soul—agony beyond the forgiveness that can ever be forgetfulness as well.

Clara, lying across the bed, her face downward, her soul in a tumult such as few women who look back at life over its almost completed span, have ever known, was roused by the sound of her father's returning footsteps in the lower hall; and in a few moments she heard the tinkle of glass and a double tread on the stairs. Then her door was unlocked and Dilsey came in with the prisoner's dinner on a tray, her father keeping grim guard at the door. He might wring his daughter's soul, but he would not starve her body.

"John Westgate ain't a minister in good standing any longer, Clarie," he began. "The deacons held a meeting to-day after service, and they are going to ask the young man to resign. Brother White's just been over to get my consent, and he got it mighty quick, I can tell you."

The old warden advanced a step in the room, resting his well arm against the door. "I gave

the young man your truck—it seemed to tickle him mightily, from the way he laughed. I guess love for you ain't agoing to kill John Westgate, not by a long shot, my girl. It's a big lot more apt to be love for old Westgate's money."

It was one of the many psychological twists in human nature that this old man, who really loved his daughter, should seem to take delight in torturing her because her lover had offended him.

The long day dragged itself to a close at last. In the middle of the afternoon a short, sudden shower came up, but in an hour after the sun was shining as brightly as ever.

Towards sunset the procession of two again came to Clara's door; the first tray was removed and a second one with her supper was put in its place.

"The Sons of Liberty are going to settle Priest Ryan to-night, my girl."

Deacon Tidwell was evidently inclined to keep his daughter well informed as to the happenings of the outside world. "I guess this community's had about the last trouble with

the Romish priest for a long time to come. I reckon he'll find it convenient to pull up stakes and leave the country for good. He won't get a chance to murder your father again."

Clara was so used to laughing goodnaturedly at her father's originalities of speech, that she wanted to ask him, from force of habit, how many times a man could be murdered.

Again left to herself, she wondered in a vague sort of way what the S. O. L. could be plotting to the hurt of Father Ryan. But with the selfishness of love she was thinking more vividly of herself and John Westgate. What if her father kept her shut up until John had left the country, as he would surely do now that his church had officially turned against him! If she could only see him for one little half-hour!

"My darling, my beloved, surely you know that you can trust me!"

Clara crouched by the window watching the sun go down and the stars come out one by one. The moon would not rise until quite late, but she had forgotten the fact, and was wondering why she could not see it. Wild schemes surged



through her brain. She went to the window in the back of the room hoping to get a word with Dilsey. Perhaps she could bribe her to carry a note to John Westgate.

Dilsey was a chocolate-colored damsel who served the Tidwells as cook and maid of all work.

Very soon the Afro-American came out of the kitchen door, in all the glory of her Sunday best, on her way to prayer-meeting—the most popular form of amusement that the colored population of Milton had yet devised.

"Dilsey, oh, Dilsey!" the prisoner called softly. "Dilsey, I want you to carry a note to Mr. John Westgate for me. I'll give you a dollar if you will."

"Oh, Miss Clarie, honey, I'd like to, I'd like to pow'ful well, but yo' paw'd jes' kill me."

"He won't know anything about it," pleaded the girl. "I'll give you my blue organdie, if you will."

The colloquy went on, the bribe steadily increasing, until Dilsey, cupidity getting the better of fear, had consented to take the note; when Deacon Tidwell, evidently thinking that

he had received his cue, appeared on the scene.

"So my daughter's got down to bribing niggers to carry her notes! 'He won't know anything about it,' will he? Dilsey, you black nigger, let me catch you carrying notes to anybody——" He left the punishment to her imagination, quite unmindful of the fact that Dilsey as a free American need not take any punishment whatever, but could pack her little zinc trunk and find another home.

The Deacon withdrew, Dilsey took herself off to prayer-meeting, and Clara, left to her thoughts, sank in an agonized little heap on the floor, shaking with the sobs that sicken the body and scar the soul.

"John, John, if you could only know—if you could only trust me! Your heart is aching wearily this night, and I—oh, why cannot I be with you to comfort you!"

The clatter of heavy boots coming up the stairs attracted her attention, and then a light shone in her brother's room. Hiram was evidently entertaining a number of his friends, six or seven of them, to judge from the noise they

were making. They were laughing uproariously, and her brother, who had been absent all day, either did not know of his sister's imprisonment or had forgotten it.

The glass was out of the transom over the door connecting the two rooms, and Clara could hear plainly all that the young men were saying. She paid little attention at first, until the name of John Westgate and then of Father Ryan startled her out of her bitter reverie.

God in Heaven! were those men—boys—her brother among them, actually plotting what might be murder! The Sons of Liberty were going to waylay Father Ryan that night, with tar and feathers!

Clara trembled as if with a chill, and her heart beat convulsively.

She gathered from their talk that the S. O. L., a detachment from Milton and a larger corps from Greenville, were to meet at the crossroads at half-past ten o'clock, all wearing masks, and attack the priest a few rods farther down the main road. They seemed to know that he had been on a sick-call, and that he would return on the night train, due at Cutler's Mill at a quarter

past ten, and that he had left his horse at the mill, expecting to ride home to Greenville that night.

One of the men, more venomously lawless than the others, openly advocated a rope.

"Dead men tell no tales, and we don't want to get into any trouble, boys," he said.

"I guess he'll be willing to leave the country fast enough, if we put on the tar thick enough," responded a harsh voice, and the others laughed loudly.

"The way of the transgressor is *tarred*!" Clara recognized with shame and indignation the tones of her brother.

What had got into Hiram? He was usually a good boy!

Then they fell to discussing their disguises.

"There ain't any use in making holes in good sheets," said one. "We can wrap them around us and tie in the middle. The blanked masks ought to be enough."

"We can't be too careful. We don't want no blanked sheriff comin' after us," said another.

"Every one ought to carry a good revolver—suppose the little gamecock shows fight? It would put us all in a blanked bad hole for one of *our* men to get hurt. That would be proof that would cook *his* goose fast enough, and he might turn state's evidence to save his own skin."

"We ain't any of us hankering for the inside of the penitentiary. We've got to keep this thing mighty quiet. My folks think I've gone out to Little Zion to prayer-meeting. A new sort of prayer-meeting it will be before we get finished!"

The planning went on until the girl wondered whether she was crazy or dreaming—the whole thing resembled a ghastly hallucination.

Then the light went out, and the men filed noisily down the stairs.

Clara flew to the door, and, with the strength born of desperation, tried to break open the lock. Already the ghost of the murdered priest was before her eyes—her own brother to stain his hands with the mark of Cain! She felt sure the night would end in murder. It was sickening, awful! She must, *must* do some-

thing. John could stop them or warn the priest! The transom!

A high old-fashioned bureau stood against the door in Clara's room, and in Hiram's there was a heavy table. Quickly climbing to the top of the bureau, Clara put her head through the opening. It did not seem very far to the table, and she was tall. Fortunately, as she thought to herself, she was also very slender.

She stepped down quietly into her own room, got her hat and jacket, for the night was chilly despite the balmy day, and tossed them through the transom. Then, twisting her skirts tightly around her long limbs, she climbed through the opening easily enough. The feat was not nearly so difficult as it had seemed from the other side.

"And now to carry this ghastly tale to John!"

She turned the knob of the door and was in spasms of terror at its creaking, but her father, poring over *The Christian Advocate* in the sitting-room below, and her mother, dozing in her rocking-chair, had not heard, or not heeded, the sound.

The escaping prisoner stole softly down the stairs, each step giving that ominous creak so familiar to every one who has ever attempted to go up or down a stairway in perilous secrecy.

She crept out of the kitchen door, and, once safely out of the house, went speeding down the path to the back gate, out into the alley, through dark streets and across vacant lots, in the direction of Deacon Westgate's. It was the first time in all her young life that Clara Tidwell had been even so far as her father's gate alone at night, and at every corner she imagined some ogre ready to grab her. The awful sensation of hearing some one just at her heels, ready to seize her if for one moment she relaxed her mad pace, lent a swiftness to her feet that dared not know fatigue.

As she turned into an alley leading past George Smith's barn she saw the glimmer of a light from the stable; and as she neared the building a squad of men, each with something white dangling in his arms, came out of the stable-door on horseback.

"Hurry up, you darned Son of Liberty,"

called a voice which Clara recognized as her brother Hiram's.

"Merciful Father, don't let them see me!" she prayed, crouching down in a ditch. But the men turned in the opposite direction, and were soon out of the alley, going at a swift trot.

"Oh, if John will only not be too late!"

A light was shining faintly through John Westgate's window—a welcome sign that he was at home.

"Where else could he be, poor John!" sighed the girl.

Continuing her run, she was at last, breathless and panting, in the shadow of her lover's home.

She picked up a pebble, and, aiming carefully, hurled it at John's window. It hit the side of the house some ten feet from the window, but the sound was too faint to attract any one's attention. A second attempt was more successful, and in a moment the window was raised and John thrust his head out, calling in no gentle tone, "Who's there? what's that?"

"It is I, John—don't make any noise. I——"



"What, Clara! Good heavens——"

"Hush! don't make so much noise—I have something to tell you. Oh, John, father made me leave this morning, and he took my ring—pulled it off my finger—and my presents, and I've been locked up all day—have just got out through the transom in Hiram's room," explained the girl, in quick whispers, running towards her lover. It was characteristically feminine to give John the words he was hungering to hear, even before explaining the terrible errand on which she came.

The young man clasped her in his arms. What mattered disgrace, ruin—what mattered anything so long as he had Clara! He was very young, and he was very much in love.

"My darling, my own little girl! I have been thinking such mean things about you! Forgive me, sweet!"

"John! how could you!"

"I didn't really—why, sweetheart, what is it?—don't cry!"

The girl was sobbing on his shoulder. The run, the terror, and the tragedy hanging over the night had broken down her strong young

nerves. Controlling herself, Clara hurriedly told her story.

Westgate's face looked white and pinched in the moonlight, and as the girl proceeded his eyes were black with passion.

"The cowardly brutes," he said between his teeth.

It was time for action—if action would only not be too late! They went to the stable, and Westgate quickly saddled his horse.

"Now, Clara, you know every moment is precious; besides, I have no side-saddle, so the only thing is to take you behind me," said John.

He mounted his horse, Clara sprang up behind him, clasped her arms tightly around his waist to keep from falling off, and they sped on their way at a quick pace. This mode of locomotion, while not common, can nevertheless still be seen in some of the backwoods districts of our country. It is known colloquially as "riding behind."

Clara Tidwell had often seen in the streets of Milton two persons astride one horse.

"Clara, are you sure you can get in? Might

not the door be locked?" inquired John anxiously, as they hurried along the silent streets.

"Oh, yes, quite sure. Dilsey has gone to prayer-meeting, and she never gets in before eleven o'clock. She always puts the kitchen key under a brick by the pump."

At the back gate the girl slipped down easily from the horse, and ran towards the house, Westgate waiting to see her enter the door. Then he struck out at a furious gallop and was soon speeding down the lonely road leading to Cutler's Mill. The shower had left the dirt road soft enough to deaden somewhat the sound of the horse's flying hoofs, but not so muddy as to impede their swiftness.

It was getting very late—John could tell that by the position of the moon; still, the men from Greenville would have a long ride before them, and he tried to assure himself that he would be in time to warn the poor man—perhaps even then rushing toward his death!

And should he be too late for a warning, and in time only for a fight—a fight that would certainly prove desperate and probably fatal—well, he had tried to do his duty—Clara would know!

If his life was to close just where he had hoped to begin its real work, why—the will of God be done.

And Clara, his brave Clara—would she live to forget him! At this point he braced up and resolved to make a determined resistance. The girl had made him stop for his revolver. Few men in the backwoods of Arkansas, even ministers, but have their Winchesters or their deadly rifles.

As Westgate drew near to the fateful cross-roads, the very air seemed surcharged with the spirit of coming doom. His heart beat rapidly, a shiver went through his broad shoulders, and shook him as if in a chill. The conviction that he was nearing his death took possession of him. Two men to forty—to forty desperate beings who would not hesitate to silence in death the accusing tongue that might bring them to the tribunal of outraged law.

A frog croaked and a scared rabbit darted across the road.

Too late!

At the cross-roads he saw the marks of many hoofs, their position indicating that the two

detachments had met there and stopped, the one side wheeling their horses to face the other squad, parleying, quite likely, over some point in dispute, or perhaps to await the nearer approach of their victim. Westgate put spurs to his horse and shot down the main road. Scarcely a dozen rods farther on the tracks turned in the woods, and the bushes and undergrowth were trampled and twisted and broken. He remembered that there was a little clearing a few yards in the woods—an old deer-lick—and divined at once that the mob was there. He dashed through the crackling underbrush, dodging the branches of the trees, expecting every moment to hear a bullet whizzing through the air. It might whiz through his head, and then his night's work would have been in vain!

At the deer-lick John found the mob. Forty men shrouded in white, their faces concealed by black masks, were gathered in the space where hitherto only the soft-eyed fawns had been lured to their death. A score or more sat on their horses, forming a guard around a squad that had dismounted and had taken the priest in charge. Their horses were hitched a few feet away, and

among them was the horse the priest had ridden, distinguishable by the knapsack still swung beneath the pommel of the saddle.

To Westgate the men seemed like so many masked and shrouded demons gathered around a witch's cauldron. They were so intent on their work that only a brief word or a muttered oath came from their lips. They had pinioned the arms of their victim and were furiously tearing off his clothes. The priest looked unnaturally pale in the moonlight, and he shivered slightly as the cutting night wind struck sharply upon the bared flesh, but he appeared perfectly calm.

So little did the mob expect interruption that Westgate was almost upon them before they realized his approach.

"Stop!" he cried, and the word of command rang out, sharp, decisive, sudden.

With revolver pointed and cocked, his horse flecked with foam and panting from the furious race, he came upon them like some avenging Michael. In a second forty revolvers were levelled at the young minister.

"Kill me if you will, but you'll hang for it," cried Westgate. "The name of every man

here is known. Kill me if you want the sheriff to end your cowardly lives with a rope. Kill me, Wesley Brown, and Jock Skaggs, and Nick Nickerson, and Tom Green, and George——”

The list was suspended abruptly, for a wild scramble had left no listeners. The men were tearing off sheets, and those afoot were running for their horses.

“The devil who betrayed us will pay for this night’s work,” hissed the man apparently in command of the mob, bringing out a horrible oath.

A string of oaths answered him, from throats hoarse with baffled rage. Westgate was quick to see that they imagined the officers of the law in hot pursuit, and he followed up his advantage.

“You think to escape, do you?” he called. “Perhaps you have very good horses—maybe the morning will tell a different tale!”

It had not occurred to any one of them as the wildest possibility that Westgate alone had braved them in their work. Had they suspected the truth for one little second, forty bul-

lets would have stilled his heart and silenced his dangerous tongue.

But a coward can never appreciate a man who is really brave, and the one thought of the mob was to outrun their pursuers.

Unnerved as he was by the encounter, the grim humor of the situation could not quite escape the young man.

He reflected with tender satisfaction that he had not mentioned the name of Hiram Tidwell.

More than one Son of Liberty meant to kill Westgate for his part in the night's work, but he also meant to do it in secret, when the officers of the law were not at his heels.

The men went tearing through the woods, holding their hands to their faces to keep on the protecting masks and to avoid the bushes. Sheets were left in ghostly piles, with a can of tar and a bag of feathers. The priest, his hands still pinioned behind him, had fallen on his knees, and in his eyes there was such a look of angelic yet heroic absorption, as if face to face with God, that Westgate involuntarily uncovered his head.

In a moment Father Ryan arose to his feet.



"My deliverer, what can I say to you!" he cried, the tears gushing from his eyes.

"Say you are not hurt, father," answered the young man. "I am only sorry that I was not in time to give you warning."

Westgate cut the cords which bound the priest, sick with indignation at sight of the bruised and bleeding hands and arms.

Father Ryan's overcoat was found hanging on a bush, and not far away was his hat. The faithful horse, restless and frightened during the attack, was now waiting patiently for his master—pity looking out of his beautiful, speaking eyes.

The young man insisted on going to Greenville with the priest, and seeing him safe under his own roof.

Near to exhaustion, his horse jaded and lame, John Westgate made his way to his uncle's barnyard just as the reddening dawn of another day broke over Picket Hill.

All this was fifteen years ago.

Early in the day which had already begun, John and Clara were privately married, her

mother, Mrs. Westgate, and Dilsey being the only witnesses, and on the night train they left for St. Louis.

By the time that the Sons of Liberty had learned that Westgate single-handed had put them to flight, he was altogether beyond the reach of their revenge.

The young couple had some lean years together, while John was preparing for the bar. But certain great personages, at a word from Father Ryan, had interested themselves in the friendless lawyer, and he soon had all the work he could do.

And now they both recognize gratefully that the events which ended John Westgate's career in Milton were the stepping-stones to his real success.



## AT THE PENSION ROGET.

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### I.

PEOPLE who were hopelessly American called it Roget's Hotel, or the Hotel Roget. Divers matrons of fluctuating ages and increasing avoirdupois, catering to the wants, real and imaginary, of the homeless hordes who spend their lives in "apartments," envious of its superior attractions, actually spoke of it as a boarding-house; but to the cultivated patrons of this very pleasant establishment it was the Pension Roget, and as the Pension Roget it figured in the bills which were rendered with surprising accuracy as to little things like gas burned after midnight, friends to dinner, luncheons served in one's own room, cracked or defaced crockery; and an accuracy not so exact when it came to deducting absences, and other trifles, which

might have lightened the scales on the other side. It was described as a strictly first-class family hotel in the advertisements, and if one were well up in metaphysical subtleties and mental reservations, one could say it afforded the comforts of home—of course, with a due regard to the meanings which are attached to a term becoming more and more elastic.

It was an old family mansion, with spacious, high-ceilinged rooms, remodelled to afford the greatest good to the greatest number. It cannot be disputed, however, that the good—which, translated into thought, means the comfort—was often sacrificed to the number. It was substantially built with solid stone walls, in a street which has fallen somewhat from its high estate of wealthy exclusiveness, as even the best of streets have a weakness for doing; but enough of its charm still lingers to keep it semi-fashionable and wholly desirable. The house stands in a large yard, with terraced steps leading to the gate, and in the rear is a grove of sturdy oaks which were old before the city was born.

I had been a widow three years, and was just thirty when I went to the Pension Roget to

spend a winter, simply because my income was too limited to admit of an establishment of my own; but I soon came to be regarded as belonging to the "permanents," and, in spite of intermittent longings for a real home, have remained here five years, with every prospect of staying on indefinitely.

The Pension Roget was not so large but that everybody knew of it twenty-four hours after an apartment was vacated—only the smaller ones were called rooms—and speculations as to a successor followed as a matter of course. The interest was greater than usual when the second-story east room became vacant in the middle of winter; for it was one of the choicest apartments in the house, and its occupants ranked, according to the great unwritten law of precedence which pertained to the Pension Roget, with the front-rooms people and those on the parlor floor. It had a bay window at the side, which commanded a view of the lawn and a perspective of the street, besides the advantage of the sun all day long. Those who imagine that sunshine and fresh air are free, have never lived at the Pension Roget. Madame made no secret of her

desire to get a married couple or two young men for that room, and when the news flashed around that it had been taken, not by two tenants, but by one, and that one a woman, our surprise was mixed with a curiosity more than usually strong. It was not only a woman, but a very young woman—in fact, a mere girl—it was said. A young lady from Miltonville, so Madame told Mrs. Rollins, familiarly known as the Postal Telegraph, who quickly told everybody else. Mrs. Bradley, who was propriety epitomized, said it was a little singular for a girl to come alone to the Pension Roget, and shrugged her shoulders in a way which insinuated all sorts of unsayable things. Mrs. Bradley was an actress of whose talents the stage, both amateur and regular, had been cheated. All the information that Mrs. Rollins could give was that the stranger's name was Beatrice Bonner, that she had brought satisfactory references—we smiled at that—had paid a month's board in advance—we still smiled—and had with her but one medium-sized trunk. Madame either did not know, or else, for reasons of her own, did not choose to tell, anything more definite

about the "young person." Everybody was a *person* at the Pension Roget until proofs were afforded which entitled one to be called a gentleman, a sweet girl, or a charming woman. Of course, none of us blamed our affable hostess for acting upon the discretion which is the better part of valor with Mrs. Rollins, and no one denied that Madame was discreet; but we were not a little startled when it transpired that she really did not know any particulars about the tenant in the east room. It was hinted among ourselves that Madame had made a mistake. None of us had ever kept a first-class family hotel, or a hotel of any kind, and Madame had spent nearly twenty years in the business; but that did not prevent our giving advice as to how it should be done—advice which was courteously received and never followed.

Miss Bonner did not give any of us an immediate chance to pass upon her attractions, for she dined in her own room on the first evening of her arrival, and either took her breakfast very early or very late, for no one saw her until luncheon on the second day.

Mrs. Rollins, Mrs. Bradley, Mrs. Liggett



Campbell, our *litterateur*, and I, were seated together at a table, discussing Realism in Fiction, and trying to persuade ourselves that the rice pudding of our American girlhood was taking on a new and undefinable flavor under the guise of *pouding du riz*, when Miss Bonner came into the room. She paused timidly at the door until Emil, the head waiter, came over rather languidly to show her to a seat. Emil knew as well as Mrs. Bradley what was, and what was not, good form. We all stared at Miss Bonner more pointedly than any one of the group would have liked to have four strange women stare at her. She was rather petite, almost too slender, with Titian hair done up high on her head, and rippling away from a fine, egg-shell part; a straight nose, and very pretty dark-blue eyes, which seemed to have an appealing, almost a pathetic look in them as she glanced around the room with its gathering of strange faces. She wore a stylish suit of navy-blue cloth, and we decided on the spot that, wherever her home, her clothes were certainly city-made.

Mrs. Liggett Campbell was saying that the reason for the lack of general appreciation of

Tolstor and Tourgeneff was that they wrote too far above the intelligence of the proletarian reader, and that we have here in America not only the conditions for tragedy, but that the conditions generate the facts—and we were all feeling very superior and cultivated; but that did not prevent our taking in the details of Miss Bonner's appearance, or keep us from seeing Bunnie Hines when he came in and took the seat next to the stranger. Bunnie was popularly supposed to have another name which he signed to his checks, and used on ceremonious occasions, but it was only a tradition, since none of us had ever happened to be around when the occasion was serious enough to banish "Bunnie." But it was personal knowledge, and not mere theory, often vague and unsatisfactory, which we had that Bunnie Hines would flirt with anything in petticoats over sixteen and under sixty; so we were not surprised, but only amused, when he handed Miss Bonner the cream-jug, which sometimes actually did contain cream, and said something, which we could not hear, accompanied with the dazzling smile which, with a blonde mustache,

constituted the *pièce de resistance* of his fascinations.

Mrs. Parks, who sat at the table next to us, gurgled an inarticulate assent to everything that was said, but Mrs. Campbell did not mind her in the least. Mrs. Parks was the victim of an unrequited attachment for Mrs. Campbell, which dated back to the first month of her residence at the Pension Roget. She announced one morning that she and Mrs. Campbell ought to be good friends, because they were both literary, and that, for her part, she just doted on books. But when Mrs. Campbell, who belonged to a Browning Society, and read papers on Transcendentalism, and the American Immortals, before the Tuesday Club, discovered that Mrs. Parks cherished "Bertha's Lovers," and counted the "Duchess" among her favorite authors, the look she bestowed on her literary sister would simply have extinguished a less inextinguishable mortal than Mrs. Parks.

There was only one other person at the table with Miss Bonner, and she came in rather late, some time after Bunnie Hines evidently had

made the acquaintance of the blue-eyed maiden. Miss Deets was a spinster from the top floor hall bedroom, who had practised Christian Science unsuccessfully enough to get her name in the papers, in connection with a child who died under her care. As a rule we were very liberal in the matter of other people's opinions and prejudices, but after Miss Deets had sent Mrs. Parks into hysterics, trying to drive away a belief in neuralgia, and had failed to cure Mrs. Bradley's baby of a belief in a sprained ankle, we decided that the religious rights guaranteed by the Constitution could be abused, and quite unanimously drew the line of our toleration at Miss Deets.

We noticed afterward, that Miss Bonner always exchanged greetings with her two companions at table, but seemed utterly to ignore the rest of us. We were willing enough to be made acquainted with her life, prospects, and previous condition of freedom, and, if they proved satisfactory, to permit her to enjoy our society; but she showed no inclination whatever for that boon. Mrs. Rollins said it was always a bad sign when a woman kept aloof from other

women. But it was probably Mrs. Parks' insistence on the romantic which made us all agree finally that there was something really mysterious about Miss Bonner. Mrs. Parks speculated daily as to whether she was a runaway wife, a truant daughter who wanted to go on the stage, an embezzler hiding from justice, an accomplice in some terrible crime of which we might have read in the newspapers in her very presence, an heiress seeing the world incognito, or a modern Juliet being forced into a loveless marriage, from which she had run away—in any case she was sure that the girl had run away. My own modest suggestions that perhaps she had come to town to study art, or stenography, or telegraphy, or to do shopping, or to prove her claim to an estate in Europe, or perhaps just for a change of air and scene, were not listened to for a moment.

After a fortnight or so I ceased to pay much attention to Miss Bonner or her secrets. I was actively engaged in a newly organized charity—the establishment of a training school for working-girls—and my time was very much taken up with it; my fourth cousin, with her

seven servants and her carriage, had the sublime assurance to say to me: "You have no house and no children to take care of, so you can afford to devote a great deal of time to the school." Still at various odd moments I was regaled with the tittle-tattle of our charming Pension.

Mrs. Rollins told me that Miss Bonner went out every day for several hours, generally in the morning. Mrs. Parks discovered that three times a week she watched eagerly for the postman, and that she received a letter each time in a large envelope. Mrs. Bradley saw her give a letter to Bunnie Hines to post one evening when it was raining, and, quite by accident, as she was coming down the stairs with that youth, she saw a fragment of the superscription—"Lawrence——" "Wash——" Her correspondent was evidently a man who lived in Washington.

Mrs. Rollins, whose room adjoined Miss Bonner's, told us one morning, with the air of imparting a state secret, that the girl had sobbed all night, adding that she frequently heard her pacing the floor, and that her light generally

burned long after midnight. The mystery was deepening.

Mrs. Watts hoped that the presence of Miss Bonner would not have a bad effect on Lucy. I am afraid I smiled in the good woman's face at this. Lucy Watts was a maiden who had long since cut her wisdom teeth, with a very evident desire not to remain Lucy Watts; and in her methods of belleship she had not omitted one jot of the privileges which an independent American girl of the most radical type could claim. In fact, before the advent of Miss Bonner, we had vented much virtuous indignation on Lucy Watts and Lucy Watts' mother.

Mrs. Rollins' announcement sent a thrill of pity surging through my heart, and I silently determined to make some friendly advances to the occupant of the east room.

The mental picture of the girl sobbing out her anguish, friendless and alone, touched a chord of pity, which, amidst the cares of the world, perhaps vibrates too seldom for our sister-women. Who was she, and what was she? And who was Lawrence? And what was she doing at the Pension Roget?—were

the questions which everybody asked, and no one could answer. And what was her terrible trouble? Tears were not unusual, for tears are the portion of women; but a grief which surged into audible sobs was certainly no common grief.

A chance had not presented itself for me to put my good resolutions into practice, when I was startled one evening, on my return from the *matinée*, by the news that Miss Bonner had gone. She had paid her second month's board in advance only the week before, and her trunk and little belongings had been left in the east room; but she herself had flown. She had told Madame that she would be away for a fortnight, telephoned for a cab, and in it, with a big valise, had taken her departure.

Mrs. Parks was sure that she had eloped with Lawrence.



## II.

LENT began rather early that year, and Miss Bonner's unexplained departure on Friday was overshadowed in the next week by the penitential sackcloth and ashes. It was quite good form at the Pension Roget to observe Lent, although this was not required by many of the churches represented in the fair persons of the dwellers under its roof. Mrs. Rollins was a Presbyterian, whom some of us suspected of consigning certain ones, in her secret thoughts, to regions not Elysian; Mrs. Parks was a Unitarian—some very nice people had joined the Unitarians since Dr. Harris became pastor of Bethany, and Mrs. Harris always invited all the women of the congregation who were not quite impossible to her Thursdays; Mrs. Bradley was an Episcopalian, as a matter of course, and went to service twice a day, with a dainty prayer-book bound in purple, with gold clasps; equally, of

course, Mrs. Liggett Campbell was a Liberalist—whatever that is—altogether beyond the “shackles of creeds”; Madame herself was a Catholic, who went to her duties once or twice a year, and to Mass on Sundays when she had time, and the weather was pleasant, and the children were well, and Monsieur her husband was in a good humor. She never objected to religious discussions if her children were not present, or she could make some excuse for sending them out of the room—and the discussions generally ended amicably enough without a single change of opinion.

The next instalment of the tragedy which we had come to believe had begun under our roof, was given quite casually by Mrs. Liggett Campbell’s husband—he was generally designated in that way—who remarked over a game of whist that he had seen Miss Bonner downtown, the day after she had left the Pension Roget, talking to Bunnie Hines.

And so she had entangled Bunnie Hines in her meshes in one short month! Mrs. Parks wanted to know why in the world he had not mentioned so important a matter before. But

he could not see that there was anything important about so simple a thing as a young lady's talking to a young man; but Mrs. Bradley said it was of *vital* importance, when the young lady was supposed to be out of the city. I feebly put in that perhaps Miss Bonner was visiting friends, but Mrs. Parks declared that during her sojourn at the Pension Roget she had never received a single call; so my theory was altogether untenable.

It certainly was a mystery, and mysteries "are bad form," as Mrs. Bradley would say. When Mrs. Rollins interviewed Bunnie Hines the next morning, he seemed even more stupid than usual, and all he could tell was that he had seen and spoken to Miss Bonner for only a moment on the day in question.

Mrs. Parks confided to me a week later that she had been in Miss Bonner's room while the chambermaid was airing it, and that she had found two or three bottles, a picture of a tremendously handsome man, a large photograph of Miss Bonner taken in evening dress, a work-basket with some embroidery in it, and a statue of the "Virgin." Mrs. Parks was uncompro-

missing in her horror of "images," having been brought up a Methodist.

While I was shocked at so flagrant a want of honor, I must confess that I listened to her account with interest. To invade a private apartment during the absence of its occupant, and go prying into drawers and baskets, was a deed I should have thought beyond even Mrs. Parks.

Nearly three weeks had gone by since Miss Bonner's departure, and no light had yet been thrown on the mystery. It was one of those soft, bright days which sometimes come in March as a herald of spring, and Mrs. Campbell and I were out in the yard, inhaling the balmy freshness of the air, when a carriage drove up, and Miss Bonner, looking simply like death, was assisted out of it, and tottered up the steps and into the house. By a common impulse we went in, but she was already disappearing at the top of the stairway, leaning on the strong arm of Emil. Madame was seen hurrying up the stairs a moment afterward, and a half-hour later she came down with a troubled countenance. To our inquiries she said that Miss Bonner had

been very ill, that the exertion of returning had been too much for her strength, and she was temporarily overcome, but that it was nothing serious.

Madame's horror of sickness in the house would have prevented her describing even the smallpox as serious, we knew very well, and I for one thought Miss Bonner a very sick girl. There was nothing more to be said, although it should not be inferred that we said nothing, and we resigned ourselves to await developments.

It was after ten o'clock that night, and I was already preparing for bed, when Madame knocked at my door. It was not often that the gifted mistress of the Pension Roget took counsel with any of her patrons, and when she did her confidence was both an honor and a responsibility. With the most graceful apologies for troubling me—the French know so well how to say a thing, and how to stop at exactly the right point—she said that she was alarmed about Miss Bonner, who was feverish and partially delirious; she thought that a physician ought to be called, but Dr. Powell's name was marked on the medicine bottles; she had tele-

phoned for him, and the message had come back that he was not in. She declared, sinking with a tired expression into a rocking-chair, that she did not know what to do. Madame has a good heart, although twenty years' experience with all sorts of people has put a little crust over some of its softer parts, but anything like real suffering breaks through it as if it had never been. I immediately offered to go down and stay with the girl, well knowing how impossible it was for Madame to be in all parts of her house at once—looking after her children, managing her husband, directing her servants, and nursing Miss Bonner at the same time. I slipped on a house-gown and a pair of old slippers, and went down to our patient.

She was slumbering uneasily, tossing about on her pillow and murmuring a word now and then. I was struck with the pictures Mrs. Parks had told me of—her own, with a bright, happy expression none of us had ever seen her wear; and the handsome, manly-looking face that gazed with a frank directness out of the easel-frame on the bureau. The Blessed Virgin seemed to look down with an all-embracing pity

from a shelf in one corner, and a vase, with a few withered flowers, stood at her feet. I felt, somehow, that a girl who placed flowers before the statue of the Universal Mother could not be a bad girl radically, whatever may have been her temptations or even her sins.

It is such a sad old world, after all, and I, with my thirty-five years, have learned some of its sorrows only too well!

I bathed her face in cologne, brushed her hair, and administered a dose of medical compound and some pellets, which I always keep, but seldom take.

The advantage of these homœopathic remedies is, that while they may do some good, especially if you believe in them strongly enough, they never do any harm.

Miss Bonner closed her eyes as if utterly weary, and I seated myself beside her bed, and began to stroke her forehead and hair with the movement Fred, my poor husband, always liked. He used to say that I was a born nurse. Presently the girl went to sleep again, and I caught the name, "Lawrence," "Lawrence," under her breath. I thought, with a

little sob rising in my throat, that if science could only find a way of taking out a woman's heart by surgical operation—the part of it that feels and loves and suffers—what a heritage of pain would be spared to so many!

“Who was Lawrence, and what was he to this girl, hardly more than a child, tossing on a bed of pain in a strange hotel?” Madame came again for a little while, and seemed relieved when I told her that I should spend the night with our patient. Miss Deets came down also, wearing a flowered challie mother-hubbard, her bangs put aside for the night, and insisted upon curing the poor young lady; but her offer was most heartlessly declined. She said the consequences of my refusal must be on my own head, and took her departure, not in anger, but in sorrow.

I was always rather imaginative, and as I kept watch at my post, the silence disturbed only by the breathing of my patient and the ticking of the clock, memory and imagination were given full play. That very room, in the palmy days of the mansion, had belonged to the youngest daughter of the house, and her life—



so guarded, so happy, so loved—rose up in dramatic contrast to the wan little creature in it then. The room adjoining, where Mrs. Rollins had set up her lares and penates—the few she possessed—had been an elder sister's. Truly these old family mansions are haunted, not by the ghosts of departed spirits, but by the wraiths of departed hopes and pleasures, familiar faces and lost honors. The beautiful salon parlor had been divided by cheap partitions into two bedrooms, which were occupied by a commonplace couple and their son; the library had been converted into a general parlor; the dining-room, where statesmen and wits and belles had feasted, had been given up to the heterogeneous crowds of a family hotel. Mrs. Liggett Campbell was in the President's room, so called from a tradition that a President of the United States, when the guest of the owner of the mansion, had slept in that room. Little Mrs. Parks seemed strangely out of place in the apartment which had once belonged to the eldest daughter, described as a queenly girl with a train of admirers. A bit of statuary, a child leading a lamb, had been left in the room, and around the

neck of the lamb Mrs. Parks had tied a progressive euchre favor. I resisted the temptation more than once to tear it off and pitch it into the grate. In one room a young man, the second son, handsome, talented, with fairest prospects, had died just after leaving college; in another, a bride had donned her wedding robes; here a sick child had racked its mother's heart; there an ambitious boy had pored over his lessons. Ghostly music, and ghostly flowers, and ghostly laughter filled the air, and a ghostly train of talent and beauty swept through the ghostly halls.

About midnight the wind came out and clouds began to chase each other across the heavens; the stars disappeared, and the moon put on a veil. The shutters rattled gruesomely, and as the wind grew stronger and went moaning around the house, the image came to me of the girl, sleeping now almost quietly, walking the floor, sobbing out her grief, or pressing her face, feverish and hot, against the window-panes—the windows went down to the floor—and seeking from nature the sympathy withheld by creatures. Here in the bay window, where that

other girl had dreamed her dreams and drunk in the beauty of a night in June, this one had battled with despair. The constellations shone on the one as they had shone on the other, their eternal beauty ever the same. Nature does not change, nor nature's God. Only man grows hard and cold and cynical, or sinks and rises with weary endeavor, and so goes on until life's pilgrimage is over.

I went over to the embrasure of the window and sank on my knees to think, for my conscience was saying many things that were not pleasant. It said that I called myself a Christian woman, and went to the asylums and the purlieus of poverty, seeking for the objects of charity, and that the stranger at my gates had been neglected; and, whether sinning or only sad, she was a woman like myself, and with claims on our common womanhood. The Saviour of man had not spurned even the outcast, and why should we hold ourselves aloof from a sister, even granting that she had erred? And of that we had not the slightest proof. Why had we been so ready to think evil, and so slow to think good?

The next morning everybody seemed to know that Miss Bonner was ill, and not a few asked perfunctorily if they could be of any assistance in nursing. Mrs. Parks was quite excited; she was sure that the tragedy was deepening, and that the fifth act might be on at any time. I had put her out of the room almost by force; she was of no earthly use, and of very decided harm, for the patient seemed to know that an alien was in the room, and tossed about uneasily until she left. She came back to say that she had camphor and salts and quinine, if they would be of any benefit, but I declined her supplies. They all wanted to be around when Dr. Powell came, satisfied that he could give a clew to the mystery; but Madame, with her usual prudence, refused to allow any one to enter the room when she came up with the physician, a good old man whom I had met before. He said that he had treated Miss Bonner for some time, that she had been in the hospital for three weeks, and that he had been very much surprised and very angry when he found that she had left.

She had been in the hospital; and that was

the solution! But why had she made such a mystery of her acts? and why had she not gone to the hospital at once, if she had come to the city for medical aid? The doctor did not say for what malady he had treated her, but pronounced the present attack to be a low fever, brought on by over-exertion, which might prove very serious. As I was the self-constituted nurse, he gave me the directions, the most imperative being that she was to have as much sleep as possible.

In the afternoon I saw a boy, in the familiar uniform of the Western Union Telegraph Company, mounting the steps; by a sort of intuition, I immediately connected his presence with Miss Bonner. Madame brought up the message, but the girl had just dropped off to sleep, and I feared to waken her. Still the message might be of the first importance, so, after some little deliberation, we decided to open it ourselves. It was dated at Washington, and ran:

“Am unexpectedly called to New York; may have to go to Bermuda; awfully sorry. Re-

ceived but one letter from you last week. Am uneasy. Send letters to the Windsor. Wire me if you are ill.

“LAWRENCE.”

At last, here was some one on whom we could shift the burden of Miss Bonner's welfare. Whether lover or brother, guardian or friend, Lawrence was certainly the one to be informed of her illness. So we indited a reply, while the messenger boy was humming snatches from “*La Cigale*” in the hall below, from which we hoped a speedy and special result.

“Miss Bonner is very ill. Wire instructions.

“MME. PIERRE ROGET.”

And then we realized the important fact, before overlooked, that we had no address. Lawrence what? We could not very well send a message to a man named Lawrence. Desperate diseases required desperate remedies, I thought, and proceeded to open Miss Bonner's writing-desk, in the hope of finding a letter or some clew to the name. There was not a

scrap in the way of a letter, but in a little compartment there was a pressed rosebud and a card with a verse scribbled on it, and—yes, the name—Lawrence Orbison.

Towards evening the girl woke, and seemed to be less feverish.

I gave her the telegram, and when she read it she burst into tears, moaning, "Lawrence not coming, after all!" In a little while she added: "But I am glad he is not coming; I would not have him come, and find me ill, for anything."

I thought of the telegram we had indited; still I did not regret sending it. Sick people do not always know what is best for them, and I saw no reason why Miss Bonner's friends should be kept in ignorance of her illness.

We received no answer all the next day, and I was seriously afraid that Lawrence had already sailed for Bermuda before the telegram reached New York.

In the evening she seemed to be much better and perfectly conscious, so I asked her if there was no one in Miltonville for whom she would like to send. She shook her head and said:

"I have no one in Miltonville; and I have no one anywhere but Lawrence. You are surprised at that, I see, but I can explain it all." I could not repress my natural feminine gratification at the prospect of really finding out the "mystery" about my patient.

"You have been so good, so good to me, I should like to tell you about everything. Even when I was asleep I knew that you were near me. I thank you more than I can tell for all your kindness. You have nursed me as tenderly as a dear sister could have done. I shall love you always, always. But you think it strange that I have no friends?"

Then she raised herself slightly, and turned her face, resting her head lightly on her hand; it was a gesture I remembered in my own Fred when he wanted to talk.

"My parents died when I was a child," she went on; "my mother, when I was a baby, and my father, when I was ten years old. I had no near relatives; my father's brothers had been killed in the war, and my mother was an only child. A friend of my father's was my guardian. I had a few thousand dollars, and I was



sent off to school, where I remained for seven years, with the exception of vacations, passed at first with my guardian, and afterwards with different school friends. My guardian's wife died; he married again, and I did not get along with the new wife; she was very young, and not very good to the children, and I, of course, sided with them. So after I left school, instead of living with my guardian, I went to board with a widow in reduced circumstances, residing in the village. We were not particularly congenial, so there was no intimacy between us; still I lived a comparatively happy life with her. I occupied my time with my music and books and painting, and in the little amusements which even a small town affords, until six months went by, and then I met my fate—as the girls say. I met Lawrence, Mr. Lawrence Orbison. He was a state senator at the time, and considered one of our leading men in that part of the country. I suppose it was love at first sight for both of us, or very near it; and in less than three months he asked me to be his wife, and I said yes. I could not have said anything else, for he had come to mean all the

world to me. In the meantime he had been nominated for Congress, and, of course, all his ambition was centred in the campaign; and he is very ambitious. We were to have been married just after the election; no one doubted that he would be elected; but, elected or defeated, that would have made no difference in the time of the wedding. We had been engaged only a little while when I was thrown from my bicycle and hurt rather seriously, although I soon got well, excepting a lump in my side, which puzzled all the doctors and caused me a great deal of pain. Suddenly I remembered—and no one can ever realize what the recollection cost me—that my grandmother had died of cancer, and the thought that perhaps a similar fate would be mine came with a horror the thought of death in any other form could not have had. I concealed my fears from everybody—from Lawrence more than all. He is so generous and noble and good, he would have insisted upon our marriage at once, so that he could take care of me. But I wanted to leave him entirely free for his political duties. I knew how all his hopes were centred on going to

Congress, and I also knew how much depended on his success during his first term. The record made then would be the hinge of his political career. I did not want him to be harassed with a sick wife; so much would depend, too, on his social footing, on knowing just the right sort of people, and yet he could not go out and leave an invalid bride at home. I thought the matter all over, and determined to postpone the marriage at any sacrifice until I was cured, if cure were possible. I said I wanted to take a post-graduate course in music, have my trousseau prepared in the town, and trumped up various excuses for deferring the marriage until spring. Lawrence was angry at first, and could not understand why I could act so in view of my professed love for him and my friendless condition; but finally he assented to my plans. And then I came here. I saw the house advertised, and liked the name, and I found that it had the reputation of being a nice, quiet place. I dared not go to the hospital for fear of arousing Lawrence's suspicions. The doctor I went to see—Dr. Powell, the first day I came—did not think I had a cancer, but only

an abscess which could have been healed before if my physician had understood his business. An operation was, however, necessary, and so I went to the hospital for that, directing the postman to send my letters there. I was just able to be out of bed when I had a letter from Lawrence, saying that he would be compelled to go to Miltonville to attend to some business, and that he would be here in a few days. My first thought was that it would never do for him to find me in a hospital; so, in spite of the protests of my nurse, I came back to the Pension Roget. I did not ask Dr. Powell, for I knew he would forbid me to leave. And now to find that Lawrence is not coming, after all!"

There was a quiver in her tones, as she uttered the last sentence, which made my heart ache. Her voice was getting husky, so I gave her a cup of champagne with a bit of cracked ice, and made her rest for a while, realizing for once in my life the full sting of remorse. I felt like getting on my knees, and forcing every evil-minded, ignoble woman to do the same, to beg that poor girl's pardon.

Self-sacrifice and the heroic are familiar

terms; they have been enshrined in song and story, in the annals of history, and in the pages of the novelist; but a nobler character had not been conceived by Mrs. Parks' Romanticists, or the Realists of Mrs. Liggett Campbell, than this girl—a girl who had chosen a lonely exile on a bed of pain, perhaps a friendless death, rather than injure in any way the worldly prospects of the man she loved.

I wondered if the Honorable Lawrence, even granting that he was a very superior person—still the testimony of Beatrice on that point ought not to hold in any fair-minded court—would have sacrificed himself for her; and my experience compelled me to answer my own question with a decided negative. Men are naturally selfish, not from deliberate intention, but from thoughtlessness; and while ninety-nine out of a hundred would accept any sacrifice from a woman, only the hundredth man would think of so sacrificing himself for her.

Without giving all the details, I quickly informed Mrs. Liggett Campbell and Mrs. Rollins that Miss Bonner was a lovely girl in every way; that she was engaged to be married to

one of our brilliant young Congressmen, who was one of the most prominent men in the State—of course I accepted the valuation of Beatrice so far as sounding his praises to the public went. He might, or might not, be a superior personage, but his face inclined one to the former opinion. I explained that Miss Bonner had come to the city for medical treatment, having been injured by a fall from a bicycle, and that if she had not chosen to take a lot of babbling, strange women into her confidence, it only showed that she still possessed the prudence with which every well-constituted baby is born.

It relieved my feelings wonderfully to say this, and I went back to my post quite refreshed. Mrs. Rollins said that she had always thought that there was something very distinguished about the girl. Mrs. Bradley insisted that a well-brought-up person ought to have known better than to come, as she did, to a big city alone; but acknowledged that girls, even the nicest, do strange things sometimes through mere thoughtlessness. Mrs. Parks was slightly disappointed that the clew to the mystery had not been more romantic.

The next day was drawing to a close, and I was resting by the window, when a carriage drew up—it looked very much like the one which had brought poor Beatrice back to the roof which had given her so cold a welcome—and a young man jumped out with a spring and entered the gate. I did not have to be told that the Honorable Lawrence had come. Premonition, or whatever it was, I did not stop to analyze, but I knew that the panacea for one girl's weary heart was then but a few feet away. Madame came to the door—I had heard her tripping up the stairs—and said in a whisper that Mr. Orbison had come, and would I break the news to Beatrice? It is so easy to prepare one for good news; it is only the bad that rends our souls in the telling! I turned away when Madame and the young lawmaker came in, but the happiness expressed in the little cry, "Lawrence!" swept the years away and made me eighteen again myself.

Forty-eight hours afterwards a wedding took place, by special dispensation, which Mrs. Parks would have pronounced delightfully romantic, if

by any chance she had been permitted to witness it. Mr. Orbison insisted upon this, and under the circumstances it seemed the best—in fact, the only thing. It was a romantic bridal in the sense that there was nothing conventional about it. No stately procession up the broad church aisle, no shimmering satin train and orange blossoms, no ushers and music and hundreds of interested or curious people, no flash of tapers, no odor of incense or beautiful ceremonies; but it was, nevertheless, an impressive wedding. The bridal gown was a Grecian robe of soft, silky white, and the bride's hair was coiled loosely with a coronet of white hyacinths; the statue of the Virgin Mother was half-hidden in a bower of bride-roses, and the perfume of flowers filled the room. A priest in surplice and stole received the vows which made the couple mystically one, and Madame Roget and I were the only witnesses.

Although Mr. Orbison is not a rich man, he chartered a car, swung a hammock in it, and took his bride to Washington.

That was two months ago. Last week I had a long letter from Beatrice—she writes to me



constantly, and persists in exaggerating the little service I was able to render her—in which she tells me that she has entirely recovered from her illness.

After devoting four pages to her house—which I imagine must be charming, and which, she says, contains a room furnished especially for me—a paragraph to her husband, who is simply the most perfect of men, she gives a line to the happiest girl in the universe, and signs herself: “Beatrice Orbison.”

## THE MAJOR.

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THE principal street in Pequod began at the foot of a hill, and meandered leisurely past the post-office and general store, the bakery, two saloons, a dozen cottages of equal size and varied architecture, until it reached a larger hill. There it made a wide detour, appearing again on its upward way, broadened, and smoothed, and gravelled, with a plank walk on one side and a rocky path on the other, shaded by large elms, and hedged in by a general air of prosperity and exclusiveness, as befitted its rising fortunes.

At the top of the hill it ended abruptly at the entrance to the Pequod Grand Hotel, an imposing and very modern structure, with its verandas and turrets and balconies dazzling with fresh paint. The flag of the country waved and flapped, or hung pensively idle, from the pole

reaching to dignified heights above the tower, proclaiming to the world that for three months of the year the Grand Hotel was the home of the brave, if they were able to afford it, in the land of the free. The equality of the people who found rest and presumable recreation under its much-gabled expanse of roof was doubtful. Their status, in the eyes of the landlord, was determined by the totals of their weekly bills. From the point of view of the guests it depended on the amount of money, or its collateral, possessed by the payers of the bills, and on the way in which the money was made.

On the first and second counts Major Hawkins was invulnerable; his totals were large, and so was his fortune. In addition to occupying the best suite of rooms in the house, he tipped liberally on all occasions; but on the third count he was lamentably lacking. As this conviction was slowly borne in upon his inner consciousness about the second week of his stay, he indulged in some angry imprecations, and used language that a Georgetown professor of rhetoric would have pronounced shocking. He had made his money, he told himself, by the

exercise of brains and pluck of the finest kind; he paid his debts, kept his word, was true to his friends, and generally managed to get even with his enemies; and what more could be expected of a man who began life at fourteen with twenty-five cents capital, and a pair of shoes, to be worn on Sundays and state occasions, that were not mates? He owed his present success in life, he was not backward in asserting, to the rule of doing as well as it could be done whatever fell to his lot to do. His first position—job he called it—was that of taking the horses from a livery stable to water at a little creek which ran through his native village. He watered those horses at the regular times, despite all the seductions of a dog-fight or of a circus parade. Then he became attached to the fortunes of a celebrated race-horse; from that he speedily attained the coveted honor of being a jockey. His horse generally won, so that his employers and the bookmakers began to regard him as a sort of mascot; their rivals offered sundry and tempting inducements to get the youth into their service, but he was loyal to his master. Through varied stages, all inseparably

connected with the race-course, he rose to his enviable position of owner and bookmaker—one of the magnets that contribute so largely to the national amusement. There was nothing in all the world that he loved so dearly as he loved a horse. Until this unlucky summer, when a threatened breakdown and the imperative orders of his physician banished him from all excitement, he had not realized that money made on horses was not quite a fit associate for money made in another kind of stock, watered in Wall Street. He had selected Pequod because a favorite racer was, like himself, in need of repairs, and was undergoing them at a famous horse-farm in the neighborhood—a sort of equine hospital—and to be near this interesting invalid, which he had raised from a frisky colt, he was recuperating at the Pequod Grand Hotel.

Major Hawkins was naturally of a social turn of mind, and nothing would have delighted him more than to take part in the quiet little games of cards which went on in the parlor, or to bear his proportion of the expenses of the picnics and excursions around the country. But he was never invited. At first he thought it

was on account of his being a stranger; but when he saw other strangers received into the inner circles of the coterie, he began to examine himself to discover the cause of his exclusion. He could not see that any one had better clothes than he, or spent money more freely. He wore the shiniest of silk hats and the jauntiest of sack-coats, and carried the whitest of diamond scarf-pins on his expansive bosom. Not having a mind capable of descending to petty details, he did not perceive that his combinations of attire were somewhat original. He saw no reason why a man should not wear a tennis cap and a frock coat, or a silk hat and a flannel suit, or a beloved scarf-pin with all costumes. Had he thought of the matter at all, he would have explained the absence of diamonds on the forms of the men he saw by the abundance of them on the forms of their wives. He had never before spent a summer at a quiet country hotel, given over to the wants of *pater* and *mater familias*, with their numerous olive branches; to maiden ladies with side curls and hobbies, and to beardless youths being speedily developed into pronounced cephalogians from the amount of

feminine adulation bestowed on their lightest word—and some of their words were extremely light, thought the Major contemptuously.

Major Hawkins had spent his summers, since reaching years of affluence, at Long Branch, or Saratoga, or other popular resorts, where he was never at a loss for plenty of friends—men of his own sort, and women too. He did not care anything about women as women; long ago he had married, and the marriage had not been happy, so that when death left him free from connubial bonds he gave no thought to ever renewing them.

But he pined for companionship—for some one with whom to talk over the races, the political situation, to go driving and play poker, and to linger over the old wines he ordered sent from New York. Life at Pequod was not altogether happy, although the air was fine and the regular hours he was forced to keep were undeniably doing him good. And as for Creole Beauty, she was positively growing more bewitching every day. So he decided to endure his loneliness for the prescribed period.

In regard to his title, no one knew less than

he knew himself as to its origin. He had been rejected during the war on account of supposed weak lungs, and he had never stayed in one place long enough to belong to a militia company. But he had a luxuriant mustache, which drooped in the inimitable military way, and an air which insured obedience from his subordinates; so a major he became, and a major he remained.

It was this involuntary isolation from his fellow-men that opened the way to the Major's intimacy with the village children, who, during the long, hot, summer days, came to play at the spring. The spring was on land still in dispute between the hotel people and the trustees of a proposed church; the matter was to be settled by that mysterious power called the law, but in the meantime children from the village and children from the hotel met on what would probably be the only common ground of their lives. The Major revenged himself on hotel parents by refusing to have anything to do with hotel children; but for the little ones of the village he proved a veritable Prince Charming. Never had they revelled in such quantities of stale candy, and weak lemonade, and foaming soda-water,



and pink ice-cream; never had the little old woman, who kept the bakery and sold thread and needles and postage-stamps and candy, made money so rapidly and so continuously. The hotel people had an unaccountable prejudice against village commerce as represented by the bakery woman, and their darlings ate only the candy which came direct from the big city.

Among the children in the Major's train was one little, dark-eyed girl, with tangled hair inclined to curl, a freckle on her nose, and two front teeth in the process of coming through her red gums—a little girl who lisped on account of the missing teeth, and said, "Yeth, thir," "if you pleath, thir," in the most captivating, child-like way to the Major's witticisms. Her name was Nell, and she lived with her grandmother in the smallest of the cottages.

Nell's mother had been the village beauty until she disappeared one day with a young man named Durand, who had spent a month at the hotel, in the interests, he claimed, of a proposed Land Company. Three years later she came back, in the last stages of consumption, bring-

ing her baby with her, and wearing a faded widow's cap. Then she died, and nothing more was ever learned by the villagers of her history. They resented this secrecy as an infringement on their rights to know all about one another's affairs, but they were good to the baby, who played in the lonely cottage and pattered about among the chickens her grandmother raised for the early spring market.

"Well, Nellie, what shall it be to-day—chocolate drops or taffy?" called the Major cheerily, as he met his favorite at the post-office.

"If you pleath, thir, I like pink ith-cream, thir," said the little girl, looking up with a smile of bon-comradeship into the honest, kindly face of the Major. Then, with her small, dirty hand clasped in the Major's big, clean one, she trotted along, chatting confidentially about the chickens and a doll that was sick, until the bakery was reached, and the pink ice-cream rose like an enchanted pyramid before her; then she relapsed into a sphinx-like silence until the pyramid became a dream.

This appetite for pink ice-cream, so out of proportion to the rest of the diminutive maid,

was a constant puzzle to the Major. But girls were a puzzle anyway, he thought.

The days wore away pleasantly enough for him now, until a day came when Nellie was not at the spring. On inquiry he learned that Nellie's grandmother was ill, and a week later the news was brought to him by a dozen awe-struck little urchins that the grandmother was dead.

After the bustle of the old woman's funeral had subsided, the question which agitated the Pequod natives was the question of Nell's future. The Baptist minister's wife, a motherly soul with nine blessings of her own, took the orphan to her heart and home until it could be determined what was to be her fate. But this arrangement obviously could not be permanent; another mouth to feed, another pair of feet to keep in shoes, another little body to clothe—it was simply impossible; but for a few days she was glad to give the child a shelter.

Soon it was rumored in the village that there was to be a sale to dispose of the grandmother's effects, the money to go to Nell, after the outstanding debts, should there be any, were paid. No one feared any debts, however; the old

woman was not the kind to make debts. The money for the funeral had been found in a broken pitcher, painted over with fat little shepherdesses, and filled with a bunch of paper flowers. No one would have dreamed of looking there for money, but Nell, when asked where her grandmother had kept her pocketbook, marched to the pitcher, and handed Mrs. Burt a roll of bills—enough and more than enough for the modest funeral.

The remainder of this, with the sale-money, would be all of Nell's fortune. Mrs. Hart said that she would buy the silver spoons, out of pure charity for the orphan, provided they sold them cheap; the spoons had been used a long time, and they never had weighed a great deal; besides, everybody knew that spoons always went for a mere song at a sale—not but that she hoped everything would bring a good price, for the sake of the poor child who didn't have a soul on earth belonging to her, unless her pa, that nobody knew anything about, had some folks.

Mrs. Jinks said that she might buy the parlor table and the carpet; the table was real nice, and the carpet 'most as good as new, although

nobody ought ever to buy a carpet at a sale unless out of charity.

And the other neighbors, presuming on the report of the sale, made it an excuse for tramping through the poor little cottage, strangely silent and uncanny in its desertion. There was the old clock ticking away steadily; the queer ornaments, all dust-covered; the faded ingrain carpet, still showing the marks of a muddy shoe which would never have been allowed on its flower-strewn surface during the lifetime of the owner; on the table, coveted by Mrs. Jinks, was the family Bible, between two upright candlesticks, keeping guard like sentinels; over the mantel were chromos of Washington and the Three Graces, and some faded photographs framed in straw. The kitchen seemed more hospitable, with the sun streaming through the curtains, the rows of bright pots and pans shining in orderly array on the shelf. Everything was humble and plain and cheap, but it had been a home, with its little joys and sorrows, its placid, peaceful existence; and twice in a decade it had witnessed the supreme tragedy of every life—the falling of the curtain in death.

Outside, the geraniums and hardy roses, the phlox and the marigolds, were drooping and thirsting for their daily supply of water. The chickens were cared for tenderly by a neighboring widow, who thought she might buy them if the price were not too great.

Gradually the question of Nell's future made its way to the great hotel, and a half-dozen ladies, who headed committees for all sorts of charities in their city homes, banded together to do something for the child; all the while deploring the fate which forced charity work on them during the hottest days in August. One of them wrote to an orphan asylum in which she was interested, but the answer came back promptly that there were too many applicants already, and that Pequod should be made to understand that it must take care of its own orphans. Then a subscription list was thought of; and, on the first night of Major Hawkins' return from a business trip to New York, he was approached by Mrs. Van Horton-Brown, a lady who had hitherto ignored his existence, and solicited to attach his signature to a contribution more or less liberal for the orphan. He

refused with more force than politeness, and left the worthy matron to wonder at the hypocrisy of human nature as exemplified by questionable widowers, who pretended to a fondness for children, and who would not give even five dollars to keep the wolf from an orphan's door.

After dinner the Major donned his silk hat, as being more in keeping with the solemn occasion, since he could not forego a seersucker coat with the thermometer at ninety, and made his way to the minister's, where he was told that he would find Nell.

The visit was eminently satisfactory to all concerned; good Mrs. Harlan, with a roll of the Major's bank-notes in her hand, was only too willing to keep the child indefinitely. And when Nell put her arms around his neck and cried, the Major vowed, by all the most binding vows he knew, that she should never want for anything while he had a dollar, nor go to that insufferable Mrs. Brown's orphan asylum, either.

In a day or two the Major was off again. The fall racing was nearing its season, and there were many things to be looked after. This time the object of his journey was to see the

directors of a fair association in a little hamlet on his way to New York, and decide whether their fair would be worthy of a race for Creole Beauty. In a suburb of this thriving town there was a modest brick building, hedged in with rows of maples and slender willows, and with a smooth sloping lawn, dotted with bright flower-beds. The Major had long known, in a vague way, that this was a boarding-school for girls, in charge of Sisters, but the matter had never concerned him; he knew nothing about girls, and was not interested in nuns; they were good women, sacrificing their lives for a world that lacked a great deal, in his estimation, of being worthy of the sacrifice; but that was their affair, not his. Now it suddenly occurred to him that this was the very place for Nellie Durand. After deciding upon a plan, he did not usually lose any time in acting upon it; so, on his way to the station from the fair grounds, he stopped at the cross-surmounted gate. He liked the looks of the place, and he liked better the looks of the Superior who entered the parlor in response to his summons.

After an interview, short but very much to



the point, the Sisters agreed to receive the little girl as a pupil, to give her a home during the vacations, or as long as it would be required. The compensation asked seemed so ridiculously small in the eyes of the Major, that he got reckless and said: "Put in all the extra fixings—music and singing and painting, and all the frills your girls learn; I don't know anything about such things, but I believe girls and women like them, and I like a song myself if it's got any tune to it. And get her whatever clothes she needs, and I'll pay the bills. She's a cute sort of youngster, and I ain't got anybody of my own that's got any claims on me, so I'll take care of this little one."

And thus, by a propitious turn in the wheel of her fortune, Nellie Durand found herself domiciled as the youngest pupil in this pleasant convent-school. On the second day after her arrival she wrote, with much painstaking, a letter which was preserved for years in a pigeon-hole of the Major's desk:

"deer mager i like it Hear i like mother josuf  
and i like the girls wun naimed mari give me

some candy i like her i like you moar than eny  
body i can play kroka

“yore Loving little girl

“Nellie Durand.”

The next missive showed a decided improvement over this one, and the Major suspected that such rapid strides in spelling and the use of capitals were brought about only by the judicious assistance of a teacher.

Every week a letter came to him, telling of the simple joys and ambitions of the convent; of Nellie's studies and her teachers and her schoolmates. Occasionally he answered one, and two or three times a year when he happened to be in the neighborhood—anything under a hundred miles was the neighborhood to the Major—he paid the child a visit. At Christmas he ordered a box sent to her with candy and fruit and cake enough to banquet the school. He would have bought her jewelry and furs and hats, only that the Mother Superior told him that such things were forbidden to the pupils, and that they were not becoming

for children, and that he had better leave Nell's wardrobe to the Sisters, which he did accordingly.

The years went by uneventfully enough, judged by the hurrying standards of the world, but marked with the usual happenings of growing girlhood for Nell. She had the mumps, and measles, and whooping-cough, and the other complaints of a well-regulated childhood; she won prizes, and sometimes got into trouble, and was put in penance; she was the champion tennis-player, the best pianist, the poorest scientist, in the school.

And before the Major realized the number of summers that were passing over his head, his girl—he always thought of Nell as “my girl”—wrote that she had been promoted to the graduating class, and would finish the following year.

“Bless my soul! is it possible?” said the Major, looking at the letter. “Well, time doesn't stand still, nor girls neither, and I guess she's thinking herself a woman. Bless me! I don't know what to do with ~~her~~ when she gets

out of school; she might study medicine or something, or go to Europe."

As a reward for her promotion Nellie was given permission to spend a part of her vacation with a schoolmate who lived in Brooklyn.

The summer burst upon the world, outwardly as beautiful as ever, but with terror in its train; the terrible scourge of cholera was upon the land; an infected ship from a foreign port had brought the fatal germ, and while it was held in leash by the watch-dogs of science and self-sacrifice, every heart was trembling. Business was at a standstill; the rich hied away to the mountains, the sea, or the pure air of the country; the poor huddled together on their doorsteps, or in the streets, and talked with bated breath of the monster whose approach was daily dreaded. There were some who scoffed at the idea of cholera's getting a foothold in a land so well guarded; with physicians so able, health commissioners so alert, sanitary precautions so many; and among these was the Major. He was rushing hither and thither over the country, making engagements for his horses, and securing investments for his capital, just as if

cholera were some far-off myth of the Middle Ages, that could not touch this decade of science and progress, of care and of common sense.

The exigencies of his calling took him to a little hamlet in the interior of the State, off the main line of travel, and reached only by a local train making one leisurely trip a day. He was not feeling very well, and, tired and hungry, and not especially amiable—he never was when he was hungry—he went to a vine-embowered inn, dignified with the name of the Continental Hotel, and ordered supper sent to his room.

After smoking a cigar he tumbled heavily into bed, wondering vaguely if he were getting another confounded bilious attack, all unconscious of the hoarse murmur that was gathering on the evening air. A negro was reported dying in one of the alleyways, and it was whispered with white lips that cholera was his disease.

About ten o'clock that night, as the men were gathered in excited groups on the hotel veranda, the report came that the negro was dead. Then terror broke loose. Cholera was upon them. A panic ensued, differing from

other panics only in size; there were not people enough to endanger life and limb when they all rushed into the streets, the soberest for the time demented. Flight was the thought uppermost in every mind; the little train would come up in the early morning, perhaps on its last trip; for who could tell what regulations the quarantine officers would impose, and then escape would be impossible; to the mountains, to the very top where it was always cold, they would go—camp out, or beg, or borrow, or steal their way, it mattered not when life was at stake.

The waiters in the Continental Hotel threw down their aprons, and prepared their little belongings; the cooks deserted the kitchen, the maids vanished, and when the Major, about midnight, rang his bell long and loudly, there was no response. He was burning with thirst and his head ached; he got up; he must have water, but he was so dizzy he could hardly stand. A death-like silence was about the place; he shouted, but only the corridor brought back the echo; then he swore, but not with his usual vim, for he was feeling strangely

ill, and then he staggered back to bed. It seemed an eternity he lay there, longing for, dreaming of water. Towards morning, when the first streaks of approaching day came through the blinds, footsteps were heard going rapidly down the halls; he shouted with all his might, and after a few moments the landlord, then locking his house, and preparing for flight, came to the door of his forgotten guest. He turned the knob, and stepped into the room, but one glance at the ghastly-looking occupant of the bed and he turned and fled as if the very air bred contagion.

Hastily he gathered his most needed effects, locked his hotel, and left the sick man to die. What else could he do? Cholera made short work of its victims, and why should he risk his life for a man he had never seen until yesterday?

When the morning train came steaming into the rough brown station, every person in the village able to raise the funds for transportation was waiting to be carried away, anywhere out of the stricken town. The telegraph wires had flashed the news of cholera, and the great

papers had blazoned it forth in startling headlines. There was one paragraph tucked away among the sporting items, telling to the world, which cared so little for him, that Major Hawkins, the popular turfman and connoisseur in race-horses, had been stricken with the dread scourge, and was dying or dead in the deserted village.

Dead!—yes he was surely dead. He had died and gone to some infernal region where all the torments he had ever heard of were concentrated in one terrible thirst. Water! only water! He was faint from want of food, but he was not even conscious of that. His thoughts went back to the spring which bubbled up so clearly near the Pequod Hotel, and with that image before him he nearly went mad. Was Heaven a land bubbling over with just such springs? Heaven!—he had not thought much of Heaven; religion had not been in his line, he said to himself. And was this the end of life, to lie here and die all alone, not one friend near? Then a great wave of self-pity swept over his heart—he had not had a fair chance; life had been a struggle, a weary



struggle, for money; then for more money, because he had known nothing else. There had been enjoyments—or he had called them enjoyments at the time—banquets to celebrate a great victory on the race-course, when the popping of champagne corks mingled with the loud laughter of his companions, and when the heavy, heated air reeked with the odors of costly Havanas, and the jokes, not always the cleanest, went round. There had been envyings and jealousies, and that one little domestic episode too stormy to cause regret. For the most part he had been homeless, living in hotels and boarding-houses; running about the country, making acquaintances in plenty, but hardly one friend who would miss him three weeks after he was gone. Was this life? Was this the best he could have done with the chances which, for good or ill, were now over? What good to others, what good to himself, had they brought? Then he thought of Nell—the one being in all the world who would miss him, and she would not miss him for long, he had seen so little of her since she had grown up; but at least he had taken care of her when she

had no other protector, and that was something to be glad of when he faced that unknown gulf between the Whence and the Whither now slowly and relentlessly closing about him. That was one meritorious act, at least, when he should stand before the God he had almost forgotten, to meet the judgment of each thought, and word, and deed. The cold drops started from his brow; he was so cold and yet so intolerably hot at the same time. Was this death? Ah! the cholera was surely upon him—had he been buried alive? Then his senses cleared, and again he thought of Nell. What would become of the child when he was gone? She would be penniless; for he remembered with poignant regret that he had made no will. He had meant to make one—he wanted to provide for the girl; but he had put it off, and now some distant cousins, whom he had never seen, would come into his property, leaving the child who really loved him, penniless.

Oh, for one day! just one day of active, potent life! he would do so much! Was he dreaming? Was that a noise in the house? Had the landlord come back? Was he dead?

Was he crazy? Surely there was somebody coming. "My God, send me help!"

Quick, rapid footsteps, the sound of opening and closing doors, as of one in search of something, then the footsteps approached his own door. He tried to call, but the words stuck in his throat; then the door opened—had an angel come down from Heaven in answer to his prayer, or was it Nellie bending over him?

Quickly the girl brought water, sparkling in a crystal pitcher, that seemed nectar from Paradise. She went unchallenged through the deserted and silent house, foraging in pantry and kitchen, and returned with a broth which she forced between the parched lips. Nor had she come empty-handed; some medicines and a book of directions had been hastily secured; but of one thing she was positive—the Major did not have cholera; the symptoms were not what her book called for, and she was puzzled as to what to do. But she fell on her knees and prayed with all the fervor of her desolate soul for help and guidance.

"Nellie—little girl—my good angel!" gasped the sick man, "you have risked your

life for me, and I am leaving you penniless. I neglected to make a will, and now it is too late!"

"Dear Major, don't think of me!" said the girl. "Don't think of money or anything like that. You are very, very ill—perhaps you will die—and you must think of God and of your soul. You have been so good to me—our Lord will reward you for it, I am sure; but we all have our sins, and you must be sorry now with all your heart for everything that offended God; you didn't mean to offend Him, I know."

She stroked his clammy brow and chafed his hands, talking to him with simple earnestness, repeating the truths of her little catechism and the counsels of her beloved teachers.

But the Major did not die. The doctor who was summoned from New York said he had malarial fever, and that the negro had probably died of any one of a hundred things, excluding cholera. After a week the patient was able to be moved, and the doctor's certificate enabled him to enter again the land of the living. His convalescence was rapid under the devoted nursing of Nell; but long before he was able to

be out of bed he sent for a lawyer, and had the papers made out for a formal adoption of the girl.

He declared that he owed not only his life to her, but deliverance from such a hell as no man could ever go through a second time without becoming crazy. He regretted that the adoption had not been made earlier; but the child was still young, scarcely seventeen, and she would soon become accustomed to a change which, after all, would practically be only a change of name.

Nellie was graduated with highest honors the following June, and after delivering a tearful valedictory and bearing away an armful of prizes, she was again on the hands of her guardian and adopted father. Then she went to a finishing school, for the simple reason that there seemed to be no other place to go. The Major had some trouble in entering her at a suitable school; applications to several well-known institutions resulted in polite regrets that they were full, after the antecedents and present vocation of the Major were investigated.

Another year passed; then business called Major Hawkins West, and as Nell had never been beyond the Alleghanies, he resolved to take her with him. She now called him "papa," with the prettiest accent, in public, but in private she still clung to the old title, "Major." They stopped off at Ovington, to see a famous stock-farm where rivals of the blue-grass region were said to thrive.

The Major was delighted with Ovington. A place which began with forty inhabitants, a baker's dozen of houses, and three saloons, and grew in twenty-one years into a regular city, with forty thousand people, electric lights, street railways, magnificent private mansions—represented an achievement which appealed to his love of enterprise; there was a certain analogy, he was not slow in thinking, between Ovington and his own life. Nell shared his enthusiasm, and her enthusiasm took a practical turn; she had acquired from the Major the way of doing a thing quickly, and doing it well, when it was presented favorably to her sound sense or her inclinations. She explored the residence quarter of Ovington during the Major's visits to the

stock-farm, and at the end of the second day, she said, in her most persuasive tones: "Major, you like Ovington, and I like Ovington; there is the loveliest house for sale up in Ray Avenue, awfully cheap. Suppose we buy it, and settle down. You could get a stock-farm and have all the horses you like; maybe they would sell the Horton farm—they say it is mortgaged. You have no ties in the East, and everything is charming here."

The proposition figuratively, if not literally, took the Major's breath away.

"Why, Nellie, what an idea!" he ejaculated, adjusting his spectacles to see if she were really in earnest. "Who would have thought of such a thing? But then you always were a master-hand at planning; but it is absurd, my dear, perfectly absurd—of course it is."

At noon the following day he announced that it was not a bad idea, not a bad idea at all, about that house, but not to be thought of. At night he admitted that he had been up to see the place; that it was a grand house, going for a song, and that he really might buy it as a speculation.

In the meantime an enterprising reporter had heard of Major Hawkins and his contemplated purchase of Ovington real estate. The real estate men heard of it about the same time. A half-column article in the *Herald* described him as a capitalist from the East; he was interviewed, and his opinion solicited on all things pertaining to the West. Together with the opinions, there appeared a eulogy of himself which made him glow with satisfaction. It was gratifying to be described as a keen, alert capitalist, eminently a man of affairs, combining the shrewdness of the East with the breezy, off-hand, cordial manner of the West.

"You can cut that piece out, Nell, for your scrap-book. That reporter is an enterprising chap, and a mighty fine fellow."

At the end of the week the Major had purchased the Ray Street house and the Horton stockfarm; had been introduced at the Valhalla Club, and invited to dinner by the ex-owner of the house. He had paid cash for his purchases, and a man capable of doing that needed no other recommendation.

A year after Major Hawkins and Nell had



taken up their abode in Ovington, the city was called upon to receive and entertain a party of distinguished visitors from the East. They were business men with their wives and daughters, travelling in a special car on a leisurely tour to the Pacific coast. They were to be the guests of the Board of Trade, and a prominent feature of their entertainment was to be a reception and ball at the Valhalla Club. Heading the reception committee of leading citizens was the name of Major Hawkins, and notable among the bevy of matrons and maids delegated to do the honors of the club was Miss Helen Durand-Hawkins.

Such was the name engraved on her visiting-cards. The Major had smiled humorously when he first saw the cards with the hyphenated and imposing name, but the smile had a touch of fond pride.

There was one little ripple that disturbed the serenity of this young lady, and that was the Major's persistence in wearing his flashing pin on all occasions. Not for all the diamonds in the State would she hurt the feelings of the kind old man to whom she owed everything; but,

being a person of some inventive genius and of a well-developed determination, she believed that the obnoxious pin, for this auspicious occasion, could be got rid of in some way.

On the evening of the reception she emerged from her blue-and-gold room, resplendent in a gown which had made the Major stare when the bill was presented, but he had not been displeased. On the contrary, he seemed to take a sort of pride in the fact that his little girl could spend money about as easily as any belle in the city.

"I don't know what these gimcracks cost, Nell, but get the best. I want Miss Helen Durand-Hawkins to be the queen of the ball. There ain't anything too good for a girl with such a name as that," he added, with a twinkle in his eyes.

Nellie knocked at the Major's door, and found that gentleman earnestly trying to get his tie into the proper loop. After demanding and receiving the admiration due her gown, she, with deft fingers, adjusted the tie.

"Really, Major, you are quite too irresistible in your new dress clothes. I am afraid Mrs.

Dawson already has designs on you, and I don't want a stepmother coming in here."

The Major chuckled; the question of marriage was as foreign to him as the question of becoming King of England, but, nevertheless, it gratified his vanity to be teased about the prettiest and most attractive widow in Ovington. And, still talking, Nell adroitly possessed herself of the pin. The Major did not miss his treasure until he was already at the club.

Among the visitors was Mrs. Van Horton-Brown, and with her Major Hawkins went in to supper. That lady peered over her lorgnette at the tall, beautiful girl with the receiving party, trying to recall where she had seen that face, or whom it resembled; but her memory played her false. The Major remembered her perfectly, although he gave no sign; but her presence recalled old memories. His thoughts were a complex mingling of the past and the present; the wandering, unsatisfactory life he had led, and the new era which had come to him in his declining years. It was something to be a "leading citizen"—the phrase gave him vivid

pleasure—of a thriving city like Ovington, and to have a beautiful, happy home.

And he owed everything, life and all, so he told himself, to Nell—to a little, barefooted girl, with a freckle on her nose, who liked “pink ith-cream, if you pleath, thir.”

It was in pursuance of this train of thought that the Major confided to Mrs. Dawson: “I’ll bet a Nancy Hanks against a mule that there ain’t a finer girl between New York and ’Frisco than my Nell.”









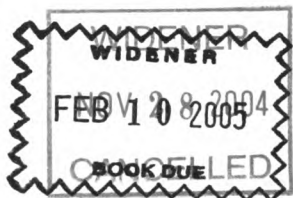




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